Los Angeles Times

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LAPD robbery figures may be skewed

An uptick in statistics is driven largely by shoplifting incidents, records indicate.

By Libor Jany

At the Los Angeles Police Department's weekly crime briefings this fall, its leaders tracked what seemed to be a troubling rise in robberies in police divisions such as Southwest and Rampart. The numbers showed an increase in stickups — if only on paper.

Upon closer inspection, department records obtained by The Times indicate that most of the incidents may have started as shoplifting.

Under LAPD metrics, hundreds of thefts in which a suspect uses force or fear in the commission of a crime are counted as robberies — even if no weapons were used and no injuries occurred.

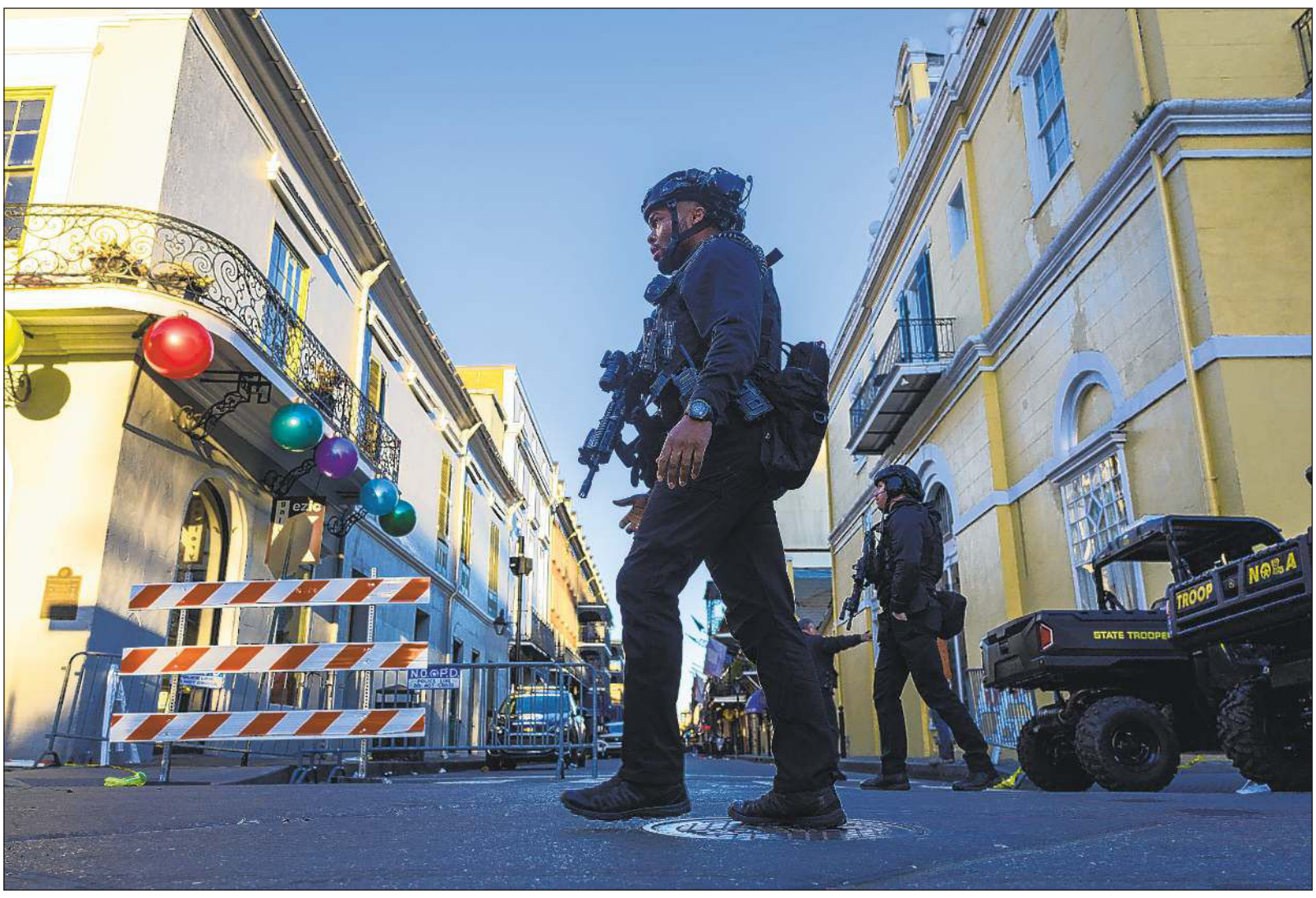
It's a common scenario: A shoplifter, arms full of merchandise they didn't pay for, makes a beeline for the exit, only to have their escape blocked by a security guard. A struggle ensues, and the thief knocks the guard over or merely threatens to do so, triggering a potential felony charge.

Through the first week of October, there were more than 1,200 such incidents across L.A., according to department statistics released through a public records request. This accounted for roughly 1 in 8 robberies, down slightly compared with the same period in 2023.

Some officials wonder whether the data reflect a shift by business owners toward more aggressive loss prevention strategies, leading to more in-store confrontations with security guards.

Faced with plunging profit margins, more companies — from mom-and-pop shops to big-box retailers such as Target — are making "stopping people at the threshold" a priority, said LAPD Deputy Chief

[See **Robberies,** A6]



Chris Granger New Orleans Advocate

POLICE and federal agents investigate the suspected terrorist attack Wednesday on Bourbon Street in New Orleans that killed 14 people.

Links sought in New Year's attacks

Authorities say man who hit New Orleans revelers acted alone, but seek possible ties to Vegas blast

By Hannah Fry, Richard Winton and Summer Lin

Federal authorities uncovered new details into the suspected terrorist attack in New Orleans that killed 14 people while probing possible links to a second New Year's Day incident in which a Tesla Cybertruck blew up outside a Trump hotel in Las Vegas.

The timing of both acts of violence, just hours apart, has drawn suspicion. Officials revealed both men in the attacks served for years in the U.S. military, including for a time at the same base. The two men also rented the vehicles used in the attacks through Turo, a platform where people can rent cars directly from vehicle owners.

But federal investigators stressed it remains unclear whether there was any coordination or if the perpetrators knew each other.

"It's an interesting thing during these kinds of investigations that if these turned out to be simply similarities — very strange similarities to have — so we're not prepared to rule in or rule out anything at this point," Las Vegas Metropolitan Police

[See **Links,** A10]

Alcides Antunes

THE TESLA Cybertruck packed with fuel canisters and firework mortars is shown after an explosion early Wednesday outside the Trump hotel in Las Vegas.

Initial snowpack outlook good

Survey shows promise, but La Niña could be just around the corner

By Noah Haggerty

Every winter, scientists across California ascend high into the Eastern Sierra via skis, snowshoes, motorized snow cats and helicopters. Along with equipment to survive harsh days and nights in the backcountry, they bring a snow-sampling kit made up of long, thin aluminum pipes.

Their mission: measure the weight of the snow beneath their feet. The simple measurement has serious implications for the whole state. Come spring, it will make up nearly two-thirds of Los Angeles' water supply — an essential lifeline as Southern California continues to endure unseasonably dry conditions.

On Thursday, hydrologists made their first measurements of the season at Phillips Station, which the state has measured every winter for over 80 years to forecast L.A.'s water supply for the coming year.

This year, the team found a snowpack equivalent to 9 inches of water at the station. It's roughly 91% of the average snowpack at the station by this time of year and slightly behind the rest of the state, which is cur-

[See **Water,** A5]

Brooke Hess-Homeier Associated Press

CALIFORNIA Department of Water Resources engineers conduct the first snow survey of the season Thursday to assess the state's future water supply.

Court strikes a blow to FCC

Appellate ruling says agency can't subject internet providers to greater regulation.

By Meg James

A federal appeals court on Thursday dealt a blow to President Biden's Federal Communications Commission, striking down the agency's hard-fought and long-debated open internet rules.

The FCC had sought to reinstate a sweeping policy established under President Obama that was designed to treat internet service as an essential public service, similar to a water or power utility.

Under the so-called net neutrality rules, internet service providers would have been subjected to greater regulation. A Republican-led commission repealed the rules in 2017 during President-elect Donald Trump's first term.

Early last year, the FCC — then back under Demo-

[See **FCC,** A8]

Islamic State's lasting ideology
Group's brutal philosophy still governs offshoots and inspires "lone wolves" to commit violence. **WORLD, A3**

A rose-colored end to season
The most prestigious of all the bowls should host the national title game, Sam Farmer writes. **SPORTS, B10**

Tesla reports declining sales
Analysts cite the lack of new models from the EV market leader amid rivals' increased offerings. **BUSINESS, A7**

Weather
Not as warm.
L.A. Basin: 67/47. **B6**

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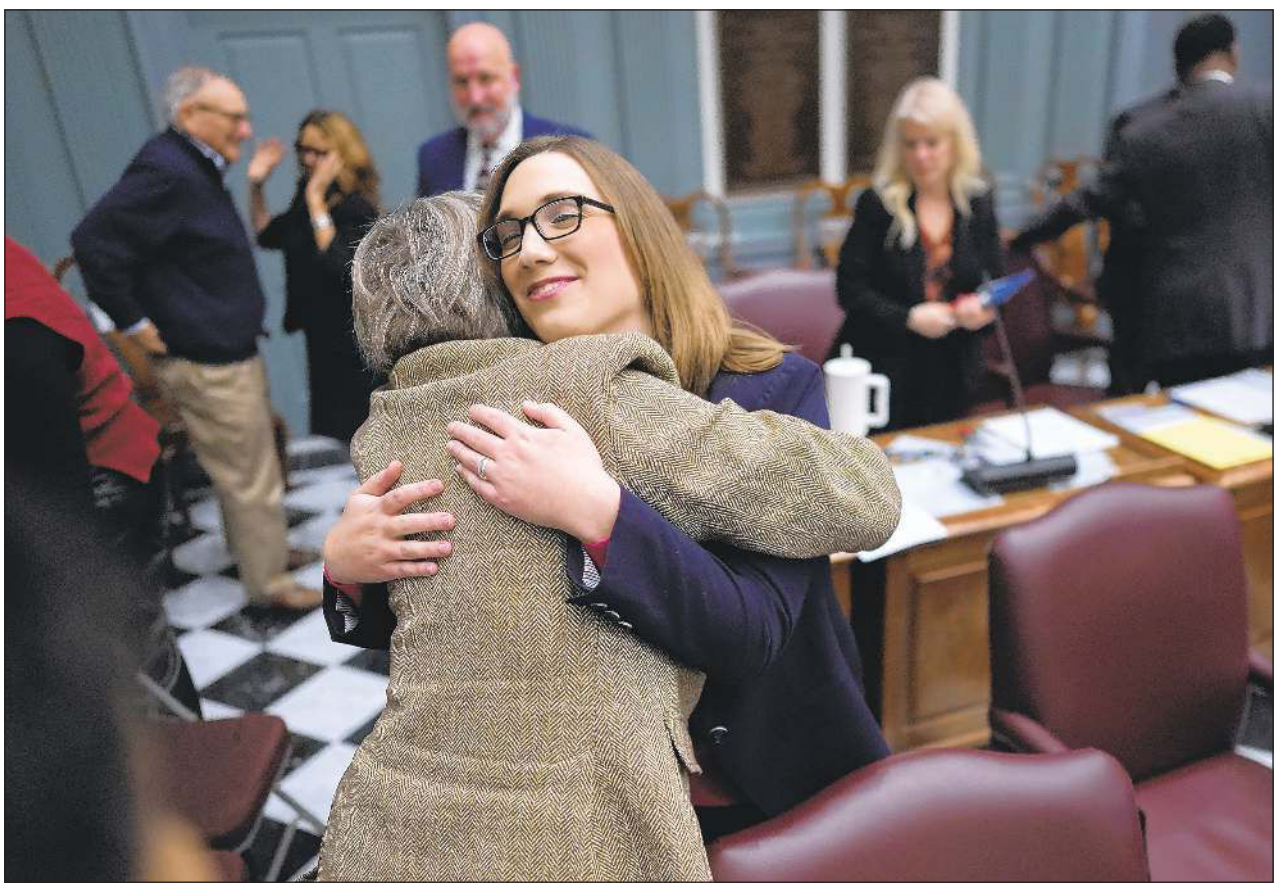
PERSPECTIVES

Transgender trailblazer heads to the U.S. House

Sarah McBride, known as a pragmatist in the Delaware Senate, will be sworn in on Friday

By Tiffany Stanley



Carolyn Kaster Associated Press

DELAWARE Democrat Sarah McBride, who is about to become the first openly transgender member of Congress, hugs state Sen. Laura Sturgeon on the floor of the Delaware Senate during a special session last month.

DOVER, Del. — It was her last day in session as a Delaware state senator, and Sarah McBride sat in her tiny office at the state Capitol preparing farewell remarks.

She had made history here, as the first openly transgender state senator in the country. Now she was making history again, elected as the first openly transgender member of Congress.

Her political promotion has come during a reckoning for transgender rights, when legislation in Republican-governed states around the country aims to curb their advance. During an election where a deluge of campaign ads and politicians demeaned trans people, McBride still easily won her blue state's only seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

But even before she is sworn in on Friday, her reception from congressional Republicans has been tumultuous. Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina targeted her by proposing to ban transgender people from U.S. Capitol restrooms that correspond to their gender identity — a ban that House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) enacted.

McBride tried to defuse the situation, saying she would follow the rules. "I'm not here to fight about bathrooms," the 34-year-old wrote in a statement.

Though some activists want her to fight harder, to those who know her, the move was classic Sarah — a pragmatist with a reputation of bipartisanship who values diplomacy over pugilism.

"There is so much joy and so much awe in having this opportunity, and I will not let anyone take that away from me," McBride told the Associated Press. "I am simply there to do the job just like anyone else."

Her political home of the last four years, the Delaware Senate, is small — just 21 members — much like the state itself, not even 100 miles from north to south. That proximity can create the kind of collegiality often lacking these days in Washington.

"We're a family," said state Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, a Republican colleague who walked over to hug McBride during the Dec. 16 special session in Delaware. "We're going to disagree on a lot of things, but we don't have the vitriol."

In between votes, McBride sat on her office's burgundy couch, typing on her laptop. A staffer went through papers on her desk. The next day they would remove art from the walls and pack up prized mementos: a wedding photo with McBride's late husband; a letter from former President Obama; a photograph with Delaware's most famous politician, President Biden.

On the state Senate floor, McBride opened the day with a prayer about "new beginnings and bittersweet endings." She ended with a speech of gratitude for her fellow state lawmakers.

"I take with me the hope that I have found here that despite the rancor and the toxicity that we too often see in our politics, that we do genuinely have more in common than what divides us," McBride said.

She continued, "We can have a politics of grace and not of grandstanding, a politics of progress, not pettiness."

Early promise and a meteoric rise

Growing up in Wilmington, McBride was the type of child who practiced Democratic political speeches in her bedroom at a makeshift podium. By high school, she had worked on multiple campaigns, including that of Beau Biden, the president's late son and former Delaware attorney general.

"She combines a passion for public service with a great intellect, with extraordinary political judgment and messaging ability," said Jack Markell, the U.S. ambassador to Italy, a former Delaware governor and McBride's mentor.

Though she seemed destined to work in politics, McBride once felt that revealing her gender identity would derail those ambitions.

She was 21 and president of American University's student government when she came out as transgender, first to her friends and family and later in a public post that went viral.

Sitting in her Wilmington condo, McBride said, "Coming out was without question the hardest thing that I had ever done up until that point. And yet it was still relatively easy compared to the experiences of so many people."

Her parents have been her biggest supporters, but they worried for her. One of their first calls after McBride came out was to their pastor, the Rev. Gregory Knox Jones of Westminster Presbyterian, a progressive church where Sarah was a youth elder and Jill Biden is a member.

"We talked about the fact that this was your child. You love your child," Jones recalled. "You can't think of losing a son. You've gained a daughter."

David McBride, Sarah's father, said that kind of support has made all the difference for their family. "Our life and Sarah's life have been made by the response that we and she got first from our friends, our church, our community."

McBride would go on to forge a trail through a rapid series of firsts. During college, she became the first openly transgender woman to intern at the White House. At a reception there, she met and later fell in love with a young lawyer, Andrew Cray, a trans man and LGBTQ+ health policy advocate.

As an activist at 22, McBride was instrumental in helping pass a transgender nondiscrimination law in Delaware. She worked as the spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign, a leading LGBTQ+-rights group. In 2016, she became the first openly trans person to speak at the Democratic National Convention.

McBride is quick to point out that she's more than just the headlines about her gender identity. "The reality is that I didn't run to be a first. I didn't run to make history with an election," she said.

Her focus is to be the best member of Congress she can be for all of Delaware and the country, she said. It's the "only way that I can guarantee that while I may be a first, I'm not the last."

Both a show pony and a workhorse

Before working with McBride, Democratic state Sen. Elizabeth Lockman thought "she was probably a bit of a show pony, so good at presenting herself, public speaking," and already destined for a larger stage.

"OK, she is the show pony, but can she be a workhorse?" Lockman recalled thinking. "What I like to tell her is that she proved to us that she's both. She's probably one of the hardest-working people."

McBride rarely stops to eat on busy days, instead subsisting on a steady diet of coffee, heavy on the cream and sweetener.

She likes kitchen table policy issues: healthcare, paid family leave, child care and affordable housing. In the state Senate, she chaired the health committee and helped expand access to Medicaid and dental care for underserved communities. Most of her bills received bipartisan support.

Pettyjohn, her Republican colleague, appreciated that McBride would often seek conservative members' input on legislation. "She's always one to come over, to make that effort to get outside that echo chamber and say, 'What can we do to polish it up some, to make it better?' "

Her signature accomplishment was helping pass paid family and medical leave in Delaware. It was personal for McBride.

Her partner, Cray, was 27 when he was diagnosed with oral cancer. Within a year, the prognosis was terminal. They moved up their wedding. They asked the Rev. Gene Robinson, a friend and the first openly gay Episcopal bishop, to officiate.

They married on the rooftop of their apartment building in August 2014. Cray died four days later at a hospital.

"I think about all of the people who have to deal with what we dealt with or worse, without health insurance, without family support, without paid leave, without jobs that allowed them to continue to pay their rent," McBride said. "I just cannot imagine getting through even a fraction of what we went through without the support we had. It is a moral failing of our society and our country."

Practicing the politics of grace

The word "grace" comes up a lot with McBride.

She does everything "with a lot of grace and patience," Lockman said.

"She handled that with far more grace than I would have shown," said Mat Marshall, a friend since high school, referring to McBride's reaction to the congressional bathroom ban.

In her 2018 memoir, McBride wrote a chapter titled "Amazing grace," about "beautiful acts of kindness" she witnessed during the last weeks of Cray's life.

"A lot of times when people go through loss, it can be either faith-crushing or faith-affirming. And for me, it was faith-affirming," she said.

In the decade since, she said she often asks herself, "What would Andy do?" And she seeks to follow his example of compassion and "principled grace" toward anti-LGBTQ+ politicians. "His kindness, his decency has provided for me a North Star."

Some activists have criticized McBride for not fighting back more forcefully against the Capitol bathroom ban. She agrees it's important for transgender people to access public facilities.

"But the people who are talking about bathrooms aren't trans people. The people who are obsessing about bathrooms are right-wing Republicans who are seeking to stoke division and to distract," McBride said.

"At the end of the day, our ability to have a pluralistic, diverse democracy requires some foundation of kindness and grace."

Stanley writes for the Associated Press.

FOR THE RECORD

New Year's Day activities: In the Jan. 1 California section, an article about things to do on New Year's Day stated that Trader Joe's stores would be open. They are closed on the holiday.

Illegal border crossings drop: In the Jan. 1 Section A, an article about a decline in illegal crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border stated that the mayor of Chula Vista was among those invited to a House Judiciary Committee field hearing in San Diego County. It was the mayor of Vista.

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Olympian and Holocaust survivor dies at 103

Agnes Keleti won a total of 10 medals in gymnastics for Hungary at Games in 1952 and 1956.

Associated Press

Laszlo Balogh Associated Press

AGNES KELETI, an Olympic gold-medal gymnast in the 1950s, is shown in Budapest, Hungary, in 2020.

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Agnes Keleti, a Holocaust survivor and the oldest-living Olympic medal winner, has died. She was 103.

Keleti died Thursday morning in Budapest, the Hungarian state news agency reported. She was hospitalized in critical condition with pneumonia Dec. 25.

She won a total of 10 Olympic medals in gymnastics, including five golds, for Hungary at the 1952 Helsinki Games and the 1956 Melbourne Games.

She overcame the loss of her father and several relatives in the Holocaust to become one of the most successful Jewish Olympic athletes.

"These 100 years felt to me like 60," Keleti told the Associated Press on the eve of her 100th birthday. "I live well. And I love life. It's great that I'm still healthy."

She was born Agnes Klein in 1921 in Budapest. She saw her career interrupted by World War II and the cancellation of the 1940 and 1944 Olympics. Forced off her gymnastics team in 1941 because of her Jewish ancestry, Keleti went into hiding in the Hungarian countryside, where she survived the Holocaust by assuming a false identity and working as a maid.

Her mother and sister survived the war with the help of famed Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, but her father and other relatives perished at Auschwitz, among the more than half a million Hungarian Jews killed in Nazi death camps and by Hungarian Nazi collaborators.

Resuming her career after the war, Keleti was set to compete at the 1948 London Olympics, but a last-minute ankle injury dashed her hopes.

Four years later, she made her Olympic debut at the 1952 Helsinki Games at the age of 31, winning a gold medal in the floor exercise as well as a silver and two bronzes.

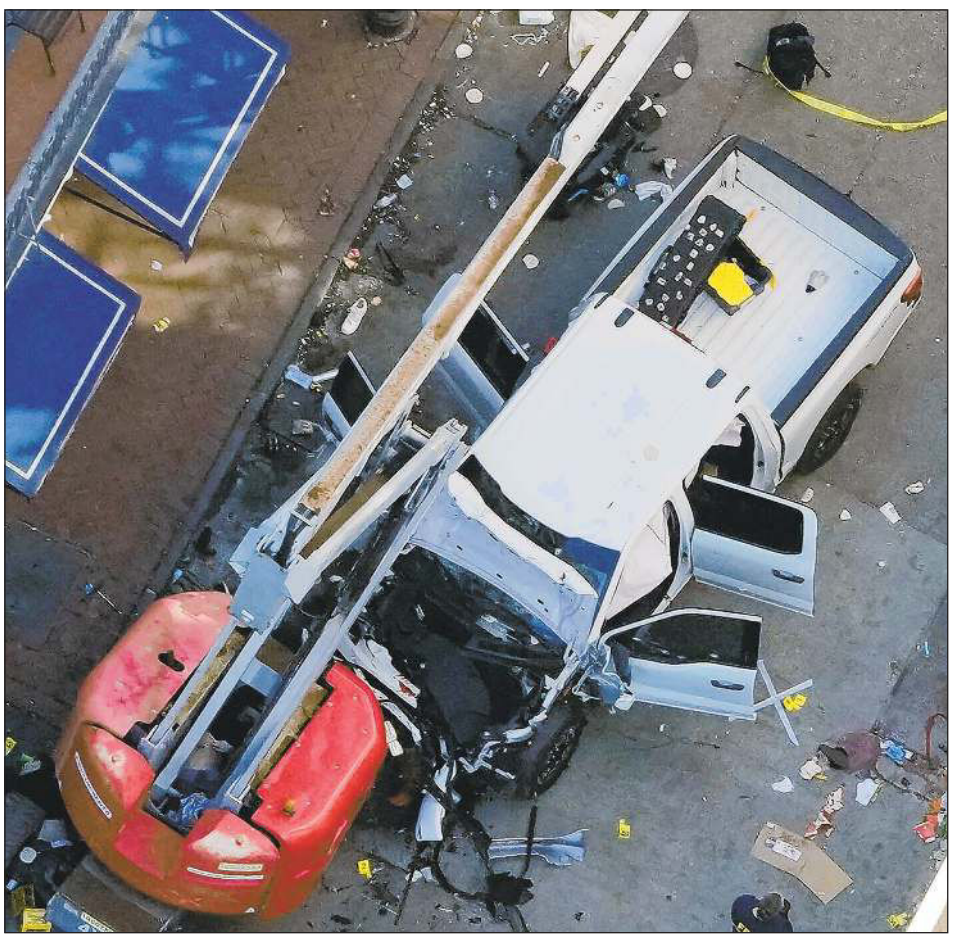
In 1956, she became the most successful athlete at the Melbourne Olympics, winning four gold and two silver medals.

While she was becoming the oldest gold medalist in gymnastics history at age 35 in Melbourne, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary after an unsuccessful anti-Soviet uprising. Keleti remained in Australia and sought political asylum. She then immigrated to Israel the following year and worked as a trainer and coached the Israeli Olympic gymnastics team until the 1990s.

Islamic State's ideology resonates

Brutal philosophy still powers offshoots and inspires 'lone wolves' to wage terror attacks and commit violence.

By Nabih Bulos and Laura King



Gerald Herbert Associated Press

THE ATTACKER in the deadly New Year's truck-ramming strike on revelers in the French Quarter of New Orleans had a black Islamic State flag, the FBI says.

BEIRUT — Screams, carnage — and a black banner.

The attacker in the deadly New Year's truck-ramming strike on revelers in New Orleans' French Quarter had a black Islamic State flag, the FBI says.

Law enforcement says it believes the assailant acted alone, killing at least 15 people in what they are investigating as a terrorist attack. Authorities are also scrambling to establish what inspiration he might have drawn from the Sunni Muslim extremist group, which blazed into the world's consciousness more than a decade ago.

By 2014, Islamic State had seized control of large swaths of Iraq and Syria. Under the group's harsh interpretation of Islam, thousands in the region, including minorities such as Yazidis, were persecuted, sexually enslaved and killed. Islamic State's deadly reach spread into Europe and beyond, with Islamic State operatives carrying out audacious bombings and shootings in capitals, including Paris and Brussels.

A U.S.-led military coalition crushed Islamic State's self-declared caliphate more than five years ago. But territorial losses and the death of its leader did not end attacks carried out by its many offshoots, or by "lone wolves" embracing its ideology.

Here is a look at Islamic State, the strikes in which it was implicated or involved over the years, and the continuing threat it poses.

How did Islamic State come into being?

It started out as a rebranded faction of Al Qaeda, under the leadership of Abu Bakr Baghdadi, an Iraqi militant cleric and insurgent leader turned self-styled caliph. Those living under its rule in a wide arc of Iraq and Syria — particularly members of other religions, or of other sects of Islam — faced horrifying punishments: decapitations, crucifixion, torture.

During that same era, the group also took Western hostages, killing several, including American journalist James Foley, who was beheaded in 2014, and Arizona aid worker Kayla Mueller, confirmed dead in 2015.

A U.S.-spearheaded military coalition freed Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, from the group's grip in 2017 and pursued its remnants into eastern Syria. By 2019, with U.S. forces on the brink of capturing him, Baghdadi killed himself in a suicide blast that also killed two children. Donald Trump, who was president at the time, declared the caliphate "obliterated."

What were some of Islamic State's most notorious attacks in Europe?

In November 2015, coordinated strikes by its operatives in Paris at a concert hall and outside a stadium killed 130 people, and only four months later, airport and public-transit bombings in Brussels killed 32 people.

The group was deemed to have inspired attacks including the 2016 truck rampage in the French Riviera city of Nice, which killed more than 80 people and injured hundreds more on Bastille Day, and a ramming-and-stabbing attack on and near London Bridge that killed eight people and injured dozens more.

Have there been Islamic State-inspired attacks in the United States?

Fourteen people were killed in a 2015 shooting in San Bernardino by a husband-and-wife team who were hailed by Islamic State as "supporters." In 2016, a gunman who swore allegiance to Baghdadi shot and killed 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla.

What links New Orleans suspect Shamsud-Din Jabbar with Islamic State?

In addition to the black banner recovered from his truck, the Army veteran had posted videos before the attack "indicating he was inspired" by the group, according to President Biden. The investigation is continuing.

What is Islamic State's current status?

In the years since its last bastion in eastern Syria was overrun, Islamic State has struggled to mount large operations, with its dwindled forces conducting mostly gang-style attacks and kidnappings in the border between Iraq and Syria.

How about elsewhere in the world?

Islamic State has had greater success with its decentralized network of affiliates that have sprouted across Africa and parts of Asia.

A particularly potent affiliate is Islamic State-Khorasan — or ISIS-K — which has mounted increasingly daring attacks in the last year, including an assault on a Moscow concert hall in March that killed more than 140 people, and a twin bombing during a funeral procession in Iran that killed about 100 people.

ISIS-K was also linked to the August 2021 bombing that killed 13 U.S. service members and about 170 Afghans as the U.S. was withdrawing from Afghanistan.

How has the fall of Syria's dictatorship affected the group?

The fall of the government of Bashar Assad in Syria has raised fears of an Islamic State resurgence on home turf, with some believing its resurrection is already underway. Despite continuing pressure from the U.S. coalition and local forces, a U.S. Central Command report in July said Islamic State had claimed more attacks in Iraq and Syria in the first six months of 2024 than it had for the entirety of 2023.

A U.S. Central Command statement in September warned that a particular focus for the group was to free the roughly 9,000 ISIS detainees held in more than 20 detention facilities across Syria — what one U.S. official described as an Islamic State army in waiting.

"If a large number of these ISIS fighters escaped, it would pose an extreme danger to the region and beyond," Centcom commander Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla said at the time.

What are the most recent strikes by Islamic State affiliates?

This week, Islamic State in Somalia said it conducted an attack with 12 militants and two booby-trapped vehicles that killed more than 20 military personnel. It was that ISIS offshoot's largest attack to date, experts say.

In March, an Islamic State affiliate operating in the West African nation of Niger claimed responsibility for an assault it said killed 30 soldiers.

Bulos reported from Beirut and King from Washington.

26 die as Israel targets humanitarian zone, other areas in Gaza

One of airstrikes kills at least 10 in Muwasi, where hundreds of thousands displaced by war are sheltering.

By Wafaa Shurafa and Fatma Khaled

DEIR AL BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli airstrikes killed at least 26 people across the Gaza Strip on Thursday, hitting Hamas security officers and an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone.

As the daily bombardment continued, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had authorized a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue negotiations in Qatar toward a cease-fire deal. Israeli media said the delegation would depart Friday.

There was no immediate comment from the militant group Hamas. The U.S.-led talks have repeatedly stalled.

The Israeli strike in the seaside humanitarian zone known as Muwasi occurred as hundreds of thousands of displaced people are huddling there in damp winter weather.

"Everyone was taking shelter in their tents from the cold, and suddenly we found the world turning upside down. Why, and for what?" said Ziyad Abu Jabal, displaced from Gaza City.

The early morning strike killed at least 10 people, including three children and two senior Hamas police officers.

Israel's military said it targeted a senior officer in the Hamas-run police force. It said he was involved in gathering intelligence used by Hamas' armed wing in attacks on Israeli forces.

Another Israeli strike killed at least eight Palestinians in Deir al Balah in central Gaza. The men were members of local committees that help secure aid convoys, according to Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. An Associated Press reporter confirmed the toll.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strike.

In southern Gaza, Israel's military killed five police officers in eastern Khan Yunis. Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said the strike targeted the head of the Hamas internal security force in southern Gaza.

"Where did we find him? Where else, but of course hiding in the humanitarian zone in Khan Yunis, where Gazans are sheltering from this war," Mencer said.

Israel has repeatedly targeted the police in Gaza during 15 months of war, contributing to a breakdown of law and order in the territory that has made it difficult for humanitarian groups to deliver aid. Israel accuses Hamas of hijacking aid.

The Hamas-run government had a police force numbering in the tens of thousands that maintained a high degree of public security before the war, while also violently suppressing dissent. Now officers have largely vanished from the streets in many areas.

Meanwhile, three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike that hit a group of people walking in the street in Maghazi in central Gaza. Their bodies were taken to Al Aqsa hospital.

The war was sparked by Hamas-led militants' Oct. 7, 2023, attack in Israel. The militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. About 100 hostages are still in Gaza, with at least a third believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in retaliation has killed more than 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Its tally does not distinguish between civilians and combatants, but it says women and children make up more than half the dead.

Israel's military says it targets only militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas. The army says it has killed 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced about 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people, many of them multiple times. Hunger is widespread. Children, some barefoot or in sandals, waited in line with metal buckets or other containers at a food distribution center in Deir al Balah on Thursday.

In Israel, Netanyahu was released from the hospital Thursday after prostate surgery.

Doctors at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital said the prime minister was recuperating well, though he has a period of recovery ahead. Despite doctor's orders to remain in the hospital, the 75-year-old leader briefly left the facility to participate in a vote in Israel's parliament on Tuesday.

Shurafa and Khaled write for the Associated Press and reported from Deir al Balah and Cairo, respectively.

Investigators seek to detain South Korea's impeached president

By Kim Tong-hyung

SEOUL — South Korea's anti-corruption agency has dispatched investigators to execute a warrant to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol as hundreds of his supporters gathered at his residence in Seoul, vowing to block their approach.

Members of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials were seen loading boxes into several vehicles before leaving their building in the city of Gwacheon early Friday. The office didn't confirm how many investigators were sent.

A Seoul court on Tuesday issued a warrant for Yoon's detention after he evaded multiple requests to appear for questioning and blocked searches of his office in Seoul, hindering an investigation into whether his short-lived power grab on Dec. 3 amounted to rebellion.

Thousands of police officers were gathered at Yoon's residence. There were no immediate reports of clashes with protesters.

If Yoon is detained, the anti-corruption agency will have 48 hours to investigate him and either request a warrant for his formal arrest or release him. Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the martial law enactment.

Yoon's imposition last month of martial law ended after six hours when the National Assembly voted, 190 to 0, to lift it despite attempts by heavily armed soldiers to prevent them from voting.

Yoon has defended his martial law decree as a necessary act of governance, portraying it as a temporary warning against the Democratic Party, which he has described as an "anti-state" force obstructing his agenda with its legislative majority.

It was unclear whether the president would cooperate with authorities trying to detain him. In a defiant New Year's message to conservative supporters rallying outside, Yoon said he will "fight to the end" against anti-state forces "violating our sovereignty" and putting the nation in "danger." He applauded his supporters for their efforts to protect "liberal democracy and constitutional order" and said he was watching their protests on live YouTube broadcasts, according to a photo of the message shared by Yoon's lawyers.

His lawyers have argued the court's detainment warrant is invalid, claiming that the anti-corruption agency lacks the legal authority to investigate rebellion charges. They also accuse the court of bypassing a law that says locations potentially linked to military secrets cannot be seized or searched without the consent of the person in charge.

South Korean Presidential Office

SOUTH KOREAN President Yoon Suk Yeol has said his Dec. 3 decree of martial law was a necessary act.

Oh Dong-woon, the anti-corruption agency's chief prosecutor, has indicated that police forces might be deployed if Yoon's security service resists the detention attempt.

Yoon's legal team issued a statement Thursday warning that any attempt by the anti-corruption agency to use police units for his detention would overstep their legal authority. The lawyers said police officers could face arrest by either the "presidential security service or any citizens" if they try to detain Yoon. They didn't elaborate.

South Korean law permits anyone to make an arrest to stop an active crime, and critics accused Yoon of inciting his supporters to obstruct attempts to detain him.

Yoon Kap-keun, the president's lawyer, filed a challenge with the Seoul Western District Court on Thursday to block both the detention warrant for Yoon Suk Yeol and a related search warrant for his residence. The lawyer argued that both warrants violate criminal laws and the constitution.

The liberal opposition Democratic Party, which drove the legislative vote that impeached Yoon on Dec. 14 over his imposition of martial law, accused the president of trying to mobilize his supporters to block his detention and called for law enforcement authorities to execute the warrant immediately.

In subfreezing temperatures, supporters have rallied for hours near his residence, waving South Korean and U.S. flags while chanting, "Nullify the impeachment!" and "We will protect President Yoon Suk Yeol!" Officers on Thursday removed some protesters who lay down on a road leading to the entrance of the residence, but there were no reports of major clashes.

Some experts believe the anti-corruption agency, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military authorities, would not risk clashing with Yoon's security service, which has said it will protect him in accordance with the law. The office may instead issue another summons for Yoon to appear for questioning if the authorities are not able to execute the detainment warrant by Jan. 6.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended after a National Assembly vote to impeach him on Dec. 14 over his imposition of martial law, which lasted only hours but has triggered weeks of political turmoil, halted high-level diplomacy and rattled financial markets. Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

To formally end Yoon's presidency, at least six justices on the nine-member Constitutional Court must vote in favor.

The National Assembly voted last week to also impeach Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who became acting president after Yoon's powers were suspended, over his reluctance to fill three Constitutional Court vacancies ahead of the court's review of Yoon's case.

Facing growing pressure, the new acting president, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, appointed two new justices on Tuesday, which possibly increased the chances of the court upholding Yoon's impeachment.

Cho Han-chang, one of the newly appointed justices, said Thursday that he began his job with a "heavy heart." Jeong Gye-seon, the other new justice, expressed hope that the remaining vacancy would be filled.

Kim writes for the Associated Press.

Johnson could face a struggle to remain speaker

Louisiana Republican has Trump's support, but his leadership has frustrated some GOP House colleagues.

By Farnoush Amiri

WASHINGTON — Mike Johnson is fighting for his political life, again.

The Louisiana Republican's hold on the House speaker's gavel and his position as second in line to the presidency will be tested Friday when a new Congress convenes and House Republicans weigh whether to reelect him to the post.

The challenge, as always, is that Johnson will need almost every Republican vote to win.

Johnson has a singular asset in his favor: President-elect Donald Trump endorsed him for speaker in a social media post at the start of the week. But it's uncertain whether Trump's blessing will be enough to persuade far-right Republicans who have at times grown frustrated with Johnson's leadership and who are prone to demand concessions when their votes become essential.

Johnson, 52, ascended to the speakership in October 2023 almost by accident after Republicans struggled to replace Kevin McCarthy following the unprecedented removal of the California Republican from the job. Several contenders tried and failed before Republicans settled on Johnson, who is well-liked across the conference.

But Johnson's handling of major funding fights, including passage of aid to Ukraine in spring 2024 and, most recently, a short-term spending bill, has turned at least a few allies into detractors.

With Republicans holding a narrow 220-215 majority in the House, it would take only two GOP lawmakers voting for other candidates to deny Johnson a majority for the speakership, forcing more rounds of voting.

Here's what to know about how the House elects a speaker:

Jose Luis Magana Associated Press

MIKE JOHNSON became House speaker after Bakersfield Republican Kevin McCarthy was removed.

First, a speaker

Electing a speaker is the first order of business for the House after a new session of Congress begins at noon EST. It's a vote that members take even before being sworn into office.

The House cannot organize until it has a speaker because that person effectively serves as the House's presiding officer and the institution's administrative head. The House can elect a new speaker at any time if the person occupying that role dies, resigns or is removed from office. The speakership has been vacant only 13 times in U.S. history, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. No speaker had ever been removed until eight Republicans joined with Democrats to oust McCarthy.

Barring those instances, a speaker is normally elected at the start of a new Congress and serves in the job for the full two-year session.

The House clerk presides over the speaker's election. Lawmakers call out the name of their choice for speaker from the floor, a rare and time-consuming roll call that heightens the drama on the floor.

Members often liven up the proceedings by shouting or standing when casting their vote.

Who is eligible?

Any name can be called out from the House floor. Although it has been the tradition for the speaker to be a member of the House, it is not required.

In past years, Democratic President Biden, Trump and even a senator, Republican Rand Paul of Kentucky, have received votes for House speaker. None received the majority of the vote.

And generally, a party's official nominee for speaker is who ends up with the gavel.

Republicans chose Johnson as their nominee for speaker in a closed-door vote in November. A week later, Democrats unanimously chose Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) to remain their leader despite the party's electoral losses.

Lawmakers are not obligated to vote for their party's nominated candidate. And that is why the process can quickly get messy.

Let the voting begin

Once the House is in a quorum — meaning the minimum number of members are present to proceed — nominating speeches will be made on behalf of the nominees for speaker. The clerk appoints lawmakers from each party as tellers to tally the votes before the roll call begins.

To become speaker, a candidate needs a majority of the votes from House members who are present and voting.

Historically, the magical number has been 218 out of the 435 members of the House. But many previous speakers, including McCarthy, have won with fewer votes because members sometimes vote "present" instead of calling out a name. Every lawmaker voting "present" lowers the overall tally needed to reach a majority.

It remains to be seen whether Johnson will reach a majority to become speaker on the first ballot. Should he come up short, it is likely the clerk will move to start another roll call vote.

McCarthy went through a grueling 15 ballots over four days before he gained enough support to become the 55th speaker in January 2023.

Passing of the gavel

Once a speaker candidate wins a majority of those present and voting, the clerk will announce the results of the election.

A bipartisan committee, usually consisting of members from the home state of the chosen candidate, will escort the speaker-elect to the chair on the dais where the oath of office is administered. The oath is identical to the one new members will take once a speaker is chosen.

The outgoing speaker usually joins the successor at the speaker's chair, where the gavel is passed as a nod to the peaceful transition of power from one party leader to another.

But this time around, given that Johnson is already the speaker, it would probably be Jeffries who would once again hand Johnson the gavel.

Amiri writes for the Associated Press.

Gunmen wound 10 waiting to get into N.Y. nightclub

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ten people were wounded in a shooting outside a New York City nightclub while they were waiting to get into a private event, police said.

About 15 people were standing outside Amazura Concert Hall at 11:15 p.m. Wednesday in Jamaica, Queens, when four men on foot approached the group of 16- to 20-year-olds.

Three or four men opened fire on the group, New York Police Department Chief of Patrol Philip Rivera said during an early Thursday news conference.

About 30 shots were fired before the gunmen fled on foot. They were seen getting into a sedan with out-of-state plates.

There is "zero tolerance for these senseless shootings," Rivera said.

Six females and four males were taken to hospitals with injuries that were not life-threatening, he said.

A massive police presence and several ambulances were seen outside Amazura in video posted on social media.

The motive was not immediately known, but Rivera said: "This is not terrorism."

Amazura Concert Hall urged the public to contact police with any information about the shooting.

"We are deeply saddened by the recent and unfortunate isolated incident that occurred. Our hearts go out to all those affected by this senseless act," the venue said in an Instagram post.

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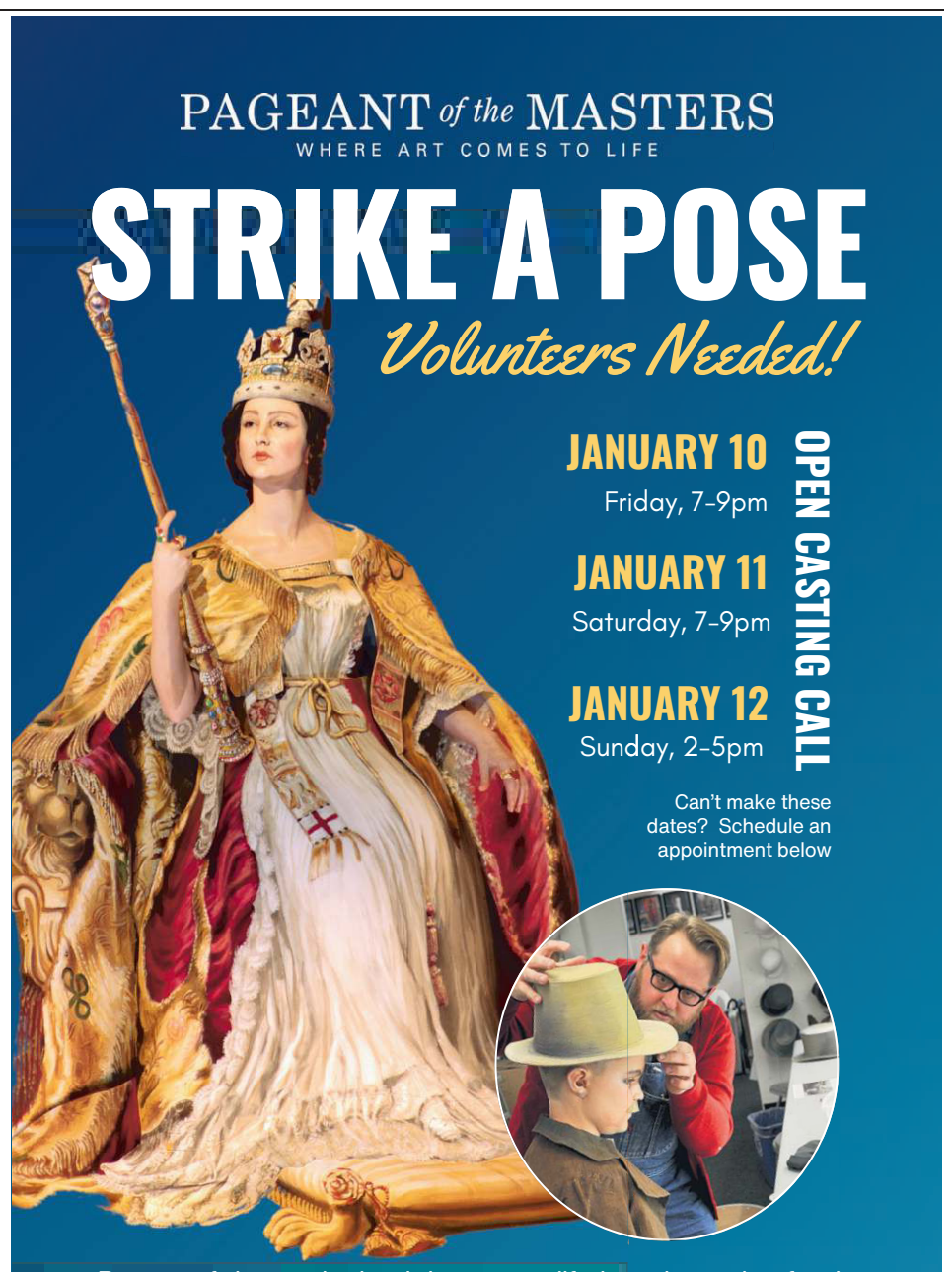

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Puerto Rico governor takes office amid outages

Protesters angry over a major blackout that hit days earlier gather at Jenniffer González Colón's inauguration.

By Dánica Coto

Ricardo Arduengo AFP/Getty Images

JENNIFFER González Colón and husband Jose Yovin Vargas arrive for her swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Thursday. The new governor faces power grid and economic challenges.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Jenniffer González Colón was sworn in Thursday as Puerto Rico's new governor during a normally ebullient ceremony held amid widespread anger over a blackout that hit the U.S. territory days ago.

González, a Republican who backs President-elect Donald Trump and whose pro-statehood New Progressive Party secured a historic third consecutive term after she won the Nov. 5 election, has pledged to stabilize the Caribbean island's crumbling power grid.

Before the start of a ceremony in front of Puerto Rico's seaside Capitol to celebrate her swearing-in, González attended Mass surrounded by family and supporters.

"What better than to come first to thank God and to ask God to give me the wisdom, the fortitude and the tools to fulfill everything I promised the people of Puerto Rico?" she told reporters.

A protester with her face covered interrupted the Mass at Parroquia Santa Teresita in San Juan. She yelled, "Jenniffer, we came for you! Puerto is without power!"

Meanwhile, a growing number of protesters gathered at the Capitol before González's arrival. Protesting the ceremony was Yara Humarán Martínez, an aquatic physical therapist whose 83-year-old mother remains without power.

"I don't have any hope that she will change anything," she said of the new governor.

González has promised to appoint an energy "czar" to review potential contractual breaches while another operator is found to possibly replace Luma Energy, a private company that oversees the transmission and distribution of power in Puerto Rico.

However, no contract can be canceled without prior approval from Puerto Rico's Energy Bureau and a federal control board that oversees the island's finances.

Outages were still being reported Thursday as crews tried to stabilize the grid after the blackout early Tuesday that left 1.3 million customers in the dark as Puerto Ricans prepared for New Year's Eve.

Although electricity had been restored to 98.9% of 1.47 million customers, more than 600,000 were temporarily left without power on New Year's when part of the system collapsed again, according to Luma.

"The stability of the system is fragile," Luma said late Wednesday as it warned of more outages Thursday, given an ongoing lack of generation. "We know and understand how frustrating it is for our clients to be without service for long periods of time."

Backup generators were put in place to ensure a smooth swearing-in ceremony Thursday, especially as musicians were scheduled to perform.

The anticipated revelry was characteristic of González, a 48-year-old attorney and recent mother of twins who before the election showed up at her party's assembly wearing a Wonder Woman tiara and cuffs. She also made the news after peeling out of one of her party's conventions in an offroad vehicle last year.

Supporters and critics gathered for the ceremony, some with umbrellas to shield themselves from the blistering sun.

"Because she's a woman, she's going to be a great governor," said Amanda Sánchez León, a retired government employee, who arrived two hours early to secure a spot outside an area reserved for guests. She said she was hopeful that González would reduce violent crimes and improve education and health, "especially for us older people." She also believed that the power crisis would abate and that González would see her promises through.

"The people are suffering," Sánchez said.

Also supporting the new governor was Lizbeth Rodríguez, a school nurse, who believed that as a mother, González would prioritize the island's weak education system and tackle crime.

But Rodríguez remains rankled at what she believes is the misspending of government money.

"That's what bothers the people. You're doing fine, sure, but look at us," she said.

González had beat former Gov. Pedro Pierluisi during their party's primary in June.

At the time, she was Puerto Rico's representative in Congress and had run on Pierluisi's ticket four years ago.

After beating him, she won the Nov. 5 general election with more than 526,000 votes, or 41%. Trailing her was Juan Dalmau, who represented Puerto Rico's Independence Party and the Citizen Victory Movement.

It was the first time that the Popular Democratic Party, which supports the island's territorial status quo and is one of Puerto Rico's two main parties, came in third in a gubernatorial race.

Although González's immediate challenge is Puerto Rico's fragile power grid, she also inherits a feeble economy that has slowly been strengthening since the U.S. territory's government declared in 2015 that it was unable to pay its more than $70-billion public debt load.

In 2017, it filed for the biggest U.S. municipal bankruptcy in history.

All but one government agency has since restructured its debt, with Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority still struggling to do so. It holds more than $9 billion in debt, the largest of any government agency.

Experts warn the island will continue to struggle to attract investors until the debt is restructured and the power grid strengthened.

González also will have to work alongside a federal control board that U.S. Congress created in 2016 to oversee Puerto Rico's finances and supervise the ongoing reconstruction after Hurricane María slammed into the island in September 2017 as a powerful Category 4 storm, razing the electrical grid. She also faces pressure to create affordable housing, lower power bills and the general cost of living, reduce violent crime, boost Puerto Rico's economy, with the island locked out of capital markets since 2015, and improve a limping health care system as thousands of doctors flock to the U.S. mainland.

Like other governors of the pro-statehood party, González has said she would push for Puerto Rico to become the 51st state, but such a change would require approval from U.S. Congress and the U.S. president.

A nonbinding referendum held during the Nov. 5 election, the seventh of its kind, asked voters to choose one of three options: statehood, independence and independence with free association, under which issues such as foreign affairs, U.S. citizenship and use of the U.S. dollar would be negotiated.

With 63% of voters participating, statehood earned more than 615,000 votes, or 59%, with independence coming in second for the first time with more than 309,000 votes, or 29%. Independence with free association garnered 12%.

Coto writes for the Associated Press.

Uncounted ballots in Wisconsin draw questions by officials

State election officials launch inquiry into how nearly 200 absentee votes were ignored in Madison.

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Nearly 200 absentee ballots somehow went uncounted in Wisconsin's liberal capital after the Nov. 5 election, prompting state election officials to launch an investigation Thursday into whether the city clerk broke the law.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission voted unanimously to investigate whether Madison City Clerk Maribeth Wetzel-Biehl failed to comply with state law or abused her discretion. Commission members said they were concerned that the clerk's office didn't inform them of the problem until late December, almost a month and a half after the election. Commission Chair Ann Jacobs certified Wisconsin's election results Nov. 29.

Wetzel-Biehl's office said in a statement that the number of uncounted votes didn't affect the outcome of any race or referendum on the ballots. But Jacobs said the oversight was "so egregious" that the commission must determine what happened and how it can be prevented as spring elections approach.

"We are the final canvassers," Jacobs said. "We are the final arbiters of votes in the state of Wisconsin and we need to know why those ballots weren't included anywhere."

Wetzel-Biehl said in an email to the Associated Press that her office looks forward to working with the commission to determine what happened and how to prevent the same issues in future elections.

It's another misstep for Wetzel-Biehl, who announced in September that her office mistakenly sent out up to 2,000 duplicate absentee ballots. She blamed it on a data processing error.

According to election commission documents, the commission learned of the uncounted ballots Dec. 18, when Wetzel-Biehl's staff told the commission that they recorded more absentee ballots as received than ballots counted in three city wards.

The commission asked Wetzel-Biehl to provide a detailed statement, which she did two days later. The memo stated that on Nov. 12, the clerk's office discovered 67 unprocessed ballots for Ward 65 and one unprocessed ballot for Ward 68 in a courier bag found in a vote tabulating machine.

The memo also stated that her office was reconciling ballots for Ward 56 on Dec. 3 when 125 unprocessed ballots were discovered in a sealed courier bag. Reconciliation is a postelection process in which officials account for every ballot created. That work begins immediately after an election. Clerks have 45 days to complete it.

The memo does not offer any explanation, saying only that the clerk's office planned "to debrief these incidents and implement better processes."

The clerk's office issued a statement Dec. 26 saying it had informed the elections commission and would send an apology letter to each affected voter.

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway released her own statement the same day, saying the clerk's office didn't tell her staff about the problem until Dec. 20. She said her office plans to review the city's election procedures.

"While the discovery of these unprocessed absentee ballots did not impact the results of any election or referendum, a discrepancy of this magnitude is unacceptable," the mayor said in the statement.

Wisconsin is a perennial battleground state in presidential elections. Republican Donald Trump won the state in November on his way to reclaiming the White House, beating Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris by about 29,000 votes.

Madison and surrounding Dane County are well-known liberal strongholds. Harris won 75% of the vote in the county in November.

Season's first snowpack survey shows promise, but that may change

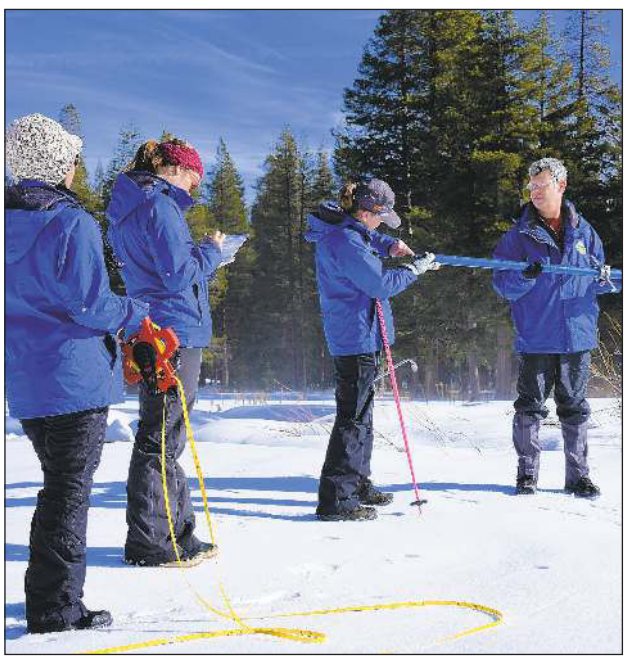
[**Water,** from A1]

rently at around 108% of its average snowpack, based on other measures that are part of a statewide snow-survey program.

While it's a promising start to the season, the numbers belie the reality that there have been extreme differences in precipitation across the state in recent months, indicating that California may be headed for a drier few years. And experts say it gives little indication of how much snow the rest of the winter will see.

"We've had that big atmospheric river series of storms in November and a few others in December, so that's a great start for the north but the south is definitely under average," said Andy Reising, manager of snow surveys and water supply forecasting at the department. "We'll need a progression of monthly storms to keep going because otherwise we will end up ... under average by the end of the year."

Roughly every two to seven years, the tropical Pacific Ocean cycles through unpredictable warm and cool periods. The warmer years, called El Niño, typically bring wetter and snowier weather whereas the cooler years, called La Niña, bring drier weather.



Brooke Hess-Homeier Associated Press

ENGINEERS in the Eastern Sierra on Thursday conduct their survey by measuring the snow's weight.

After California experienced a record-breaking wet season in 2022-23 on the heels of the state's driest consecutive three years on record, the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced El Niño had arrived.

Another snowy winter made 2022-24 one of the wettest two consecutive years on record, but in November 2024, the weather service and NOAA predicted a roughly 60% chance that drier La Niña conditions would emerge by the new year.

The state's current weather, with wet conditions up north and dry conditions in the south, is typical of a La Niña season, said Andrew Schwartz, director of UC Berkeley's Central Sierra Snow Laboratory, which makes measurements for the statewide snow survey program at Donner Pass.

"When you look at the regional differences, it's a pretty stark difference," Schwartz said of measurements from across the state. "We have 161% of average in the northern portion of the state and down south, only 75%."

It could mean the year's snowpack will level off sooner than expected, but experts emphasize that snowfall is hard to predict.

"It's been a great start to the season," said Schwartz. But the season is reminding him of the last La Niña winter, in 2021-22. "We had this nice, big fall; we had a record-breaking December; and then the tap kind of turned off in late January."

Hydrologists make the snowpack measurements by literally weighing the snow. They insert long aluminum tubes into the snow, all the way to the ground, then weigh the collection.

The measurements are designed to calculate the amount of water currently in the form of snow that will melt into runoff come spring. It provides a more accurate picture of stored water than inches of snowfall, which doesn't account for snow that has already melted or for variations in snow density: one inch of wet, dense snow holds more water than an inch of light, fluffy powder.

Water resource managers use the data to ensure Californians and Angelenos have enough water year-round.

Based on the levels of runoff, they'll adjust reservoir storage, groundwater pumping levels and the amount of water available for irrigation.

In extreme cases, it can inform the choice to ration water.

Thanks to a string of wet winters, the state's reservoirs currently sit about 20% above their average levels, but that's no guarantee of future consistency.

"Extreme shifts between dry and wet conditions are continuing this winter and if the past several years are any indication, anything could happen between now and April and we need to be prepared," California Department of Water Resources director Karla Nemeth said in a news release.

Capitalizing on wet years has become increasingly important as climate change exacerbates extreme wet and dry periods across California, state officials say.

A July 2024 report from the department found that climate change could threaten to shrink water supplies in the State Water Project — a water storage and delivery system that stretches from the western foothills of the Sierra to Riverside County — by nearly one-fourth in the next 20 years, prompting officials to call for bolstering the project's system of reservoirs, pumps and aqueducts for the state's future climate.

The department will continue to make snowpack measurements throughout the winter, and stresses that the late-season measurements closer to April are the ones that truly determine how much water California will have to fill its reservoirs.

And while La Niña periods — like the one the Pacific is likely entering — typically result in drier conditions, there are plenty of exceptions to the rule.

"Sometimes we get absolutely huge winters during La Niña; sometimes we get really small ones," said Schwartz.

"It's kind of a flip of the coin."

Shoplifting factors into uptick in robberies

[**Robberies,** from A1]

Alan Hamilton, who noted that shoplifting is still a crime, although not the serious type the term "robbery" conjures.

The broad classification, he acknowledged, is potentially muddying the department's numbers.

"You can do what you want as a business, but you're not necessarily going to get an accurate crime picture," said Hamilton, who runs the LAPD's detective bureau.

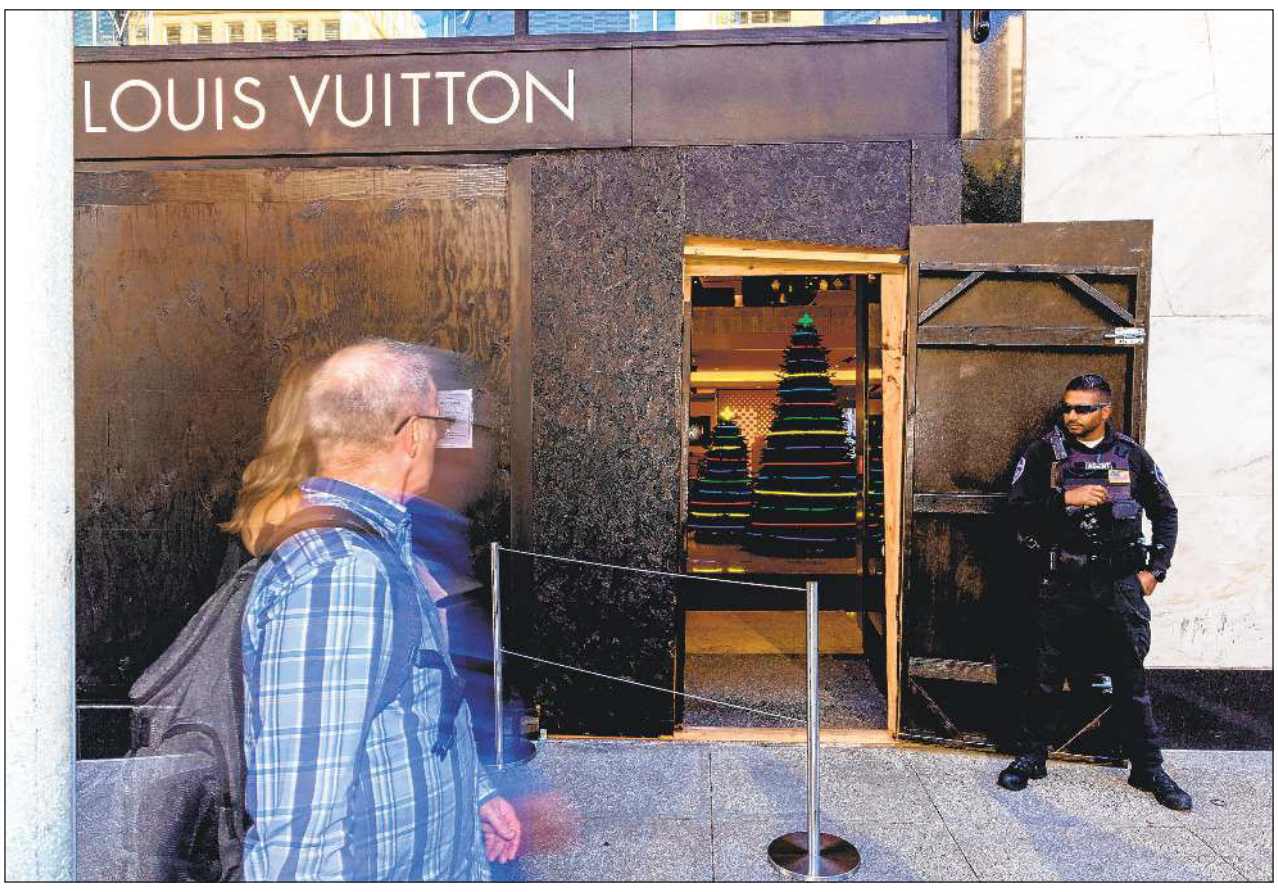
Shoplifting incidents that escalate are sometimes referred to as Estes robberies, after a legal standard that dates to the early 1980s, when a man named Curtis Estes tried to walk out of a Sears store in Vallejo wearing a down vest and corduroy coat he hadn't paid for. When confronted by an armed security guard in the parking lot, Estes pulled a knife out and threatened to kill the guard, before eventually surrendering.

Estes was convicted of felony robbery, which was upheld under appeal, with the court ruling that "a store employee may be a victim of a robbery even though he does not own the property taken."

In the decades since, law enforcement has used the Estes robbery standard to charge shoplifters with robbery even if they didn't have weapons. Although some incidents can be downgraded by prosecutors to misdemeanors or dismissed due to lack of evidence, the LAPD counts each case it refers as a robbery.

Of the top 10 locations citywide for Estes robberies, the majority occurred at WSS, a Southern California chain formerly known as Warehouse Shoe Sale.

The top location was the company's store at Sunset Boulevard and Western Avenue in Hollywood, which had 22 Estes robberies, followed closely by its location near MacArthur Park, which had 20. Other clusters were reported at a WSS store in the Southwest Division and, separately, downtown's FIGat7th shopping center.



ETHAN SWOPE Getty Images

A SECURITY guard watches the entrance to a Louis Vuitton store near San Francisco's Union Square in 2021. More retailers are making "stopping people at the threshold" a priority, a deputy LAPD chief said.

A WSS representative on Tuesday referred The Times to the company's corporate office, which didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

Hamilton, the deputy chief, said the department occasionally meets with businesses to discuss emerging crime trends. Retailers such as WSS, he said, will station guards around their stores to act as a visible deterrent but also can "harden" themselves against theft by, for instance, keeping only one of every pair of shoes on display.

He added that police typically discourage store employees from physically detaining anyone to avoid turning a nonviolent crime into something more dangerous.

"It absolutely concerns me," he said. "I'll take a theft over an Estes any day, because if you have an Estes you always have the potential for catastrophe."

Stores also can face liability if someone is injured or killed, and the risk of incurring hefty legal costs might not justify trying to wrestle a thief to the ground. There have been numerous instances of confrontations that turned deadly, including a high-profile case in 2023 in San Francisco in which a security guard at a Walgreens shot and killed an unarmed man he suspected of shoplifting.

LAPD statistics show that assaults on security personnel have risen in the last five years. On Monday night in downtown L.A., a man suspected of stealing shot and wounded two security guards who confronted him outside the Target store at the FIGat7th shopping mall.

The suspect was arrested a day later after an hours-long standoff with police who raided an apartment in the nearby Westlake District.

Some experts said the private security industry is shifting toward nonconfrontational approaches, mostly to avoid injuries to employees and disruptions in service.

Loss prevention specialists and security guards are increasingly being trained to "observe, identify and document the situation as best as possible and not to necessarily apprehend," said Geoff Kohl Sr., director of marketing for the Security Industry Assn., a trade group in Maryland.

Establishments such as jewelry stores that have high-value merchandise may still take forceful measures to prevent losses, but Kohl said the continued growth of the multibillion-dollar private security industry has been driven more by expansion of in-store surveillance.

"You're gonna see probably less and less weapons being carried and more of a reliance on technology," he said.

The classification of some minor thefts as Estes robberies raises questions about the reliability of the LAPD's crime figures, which have come under scrutiny in years past.

Inside the numbers-obsessed department, crime counts still dictate staffing decisions and serve as a benchmark for supervisors, who are still largely judged by their successes and failures in lowering serious crimes — such as homicides, robberies and burglaries — in their divisions.

Released publicly, the LAPD numbers also influence public opinion and become fodder for political debate.

Even though reliable data are scant, the perception that retail theft is out of control statewide helped lead to the passage of Proposition 36 in November, which created stiffer penalties for certain types of thefts and drug crimes.

After a dragged-out political fight in Sacramento over the summer, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a package of bills to address the rise in organized retail theft, making it easier for police to arrest shoplifters and disrupt larger retail crime rings.

Critics warn that the more punitive approaches could cause more harm than good by rolling back laws aimed at reducing the state's prison population.

The LAPD has created several task forces to crack down on organized retail theft, and occasionally deploys "blitz operations" that involve sending teams of both undercover and uniformed officers to popular shopping areas.

Jeff Asher, a crime analyst and consultant in New Orleans, said that outside of homicides and auto theft, most crime categories are notoriously unreliable and prone to underreporting.

Retail theft, in particular, is not well-tracked, "which makes it very difficult to say what is an increase and what is an increase in the change in reporting."

That said, he added, the most reliable data available show that, with few exceptions, shoplifting is lower today than it was before the outbreak of the pandemic.

"Overall in Los Angeles, you're seeing a decline in both theft and robberies," he said.

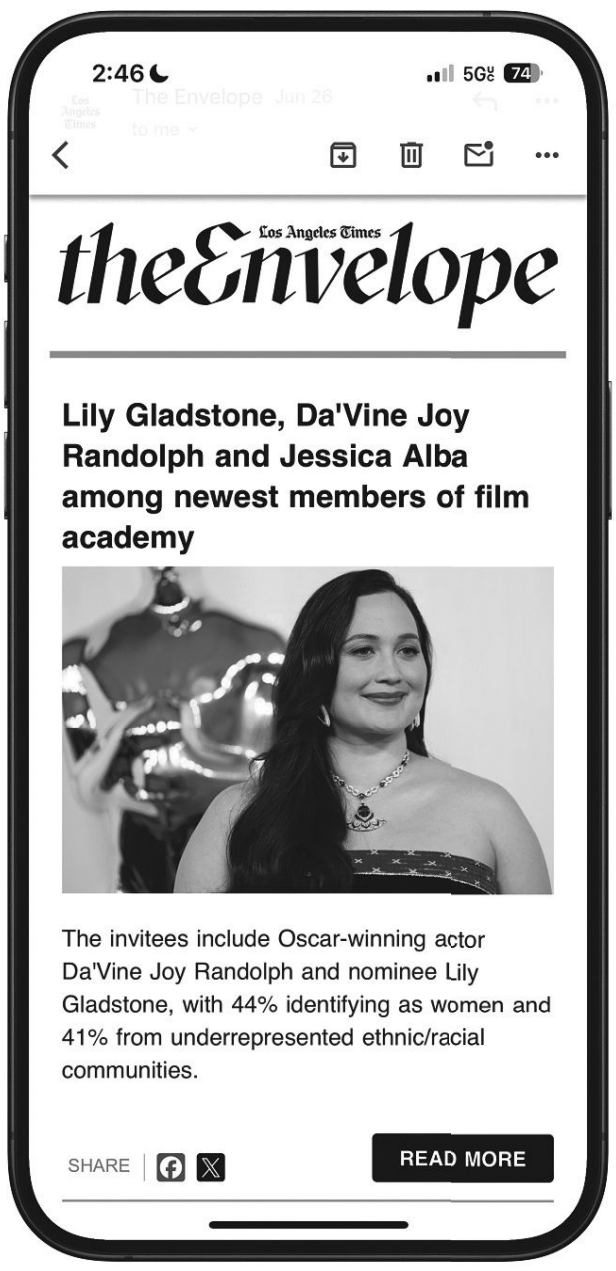
Beyond potentially distorting the city's crime numbers, subjecting shoplifters to felony charges has life-altering consequences, according to longtime defense attorney Greg Hill.

Instead of being charged with a misdemeanor or diverted to treatment, a person can suddenly face years in prison if convicted of a felony that is counted as a "strike" — greatly affecting their future job, housing and education opportunities, Hill said.

"Basically, it's shoplifting with a push," he said. "And it's usually because the loss prevention people don't properly identity themselves and they're usually not wearing uniforms so it's not obvious to a shoplifter, so it's somebody just grabbing their arm."

Los Angeles Times

theEnvelope
NEWSLETTER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The Envelope Jun 26
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Los Angeles Times
theEnvelope
Lily Gladstone, Da'Vine Joy Randolph and Jessica Alba among newest members of film academy
The invitees include Oscar-winning actor Da'Vine Joy Randolph and nominee Lily Gladstone, with 44% identifying as women and 41% from underrepresented ethnic/racial communities.
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BUSINESS

Car app used in New Year's attacks defends itself

Incidents raise questions about the ability of Turo, other peer-to-peer services to recognize threats.

By Caroline Petrow-Cohen

Eric Risberg Associated Press

STEVE WEBB, left, and Andre Haddad, shown in 2019, are the vice president of communications and CEO, respectively, of Turo. The company says it's committed to the "highest standards in risk management."

Both the vehicles used in two New Year's Day attacks in New Orleans and Las Vegas were rented through Turo, a car-sharing app.

The attacks thrust the San Francisco company that created the app, which relies on a model similar to Airbnb to enable users to rent cars directly from their owners, into the spotlight and raised questions about the ability of such peer-to-peer services to adequately vet users for possible safety issues.

In a statement, the company defended itself, saying it's committed to the "highest standards in risk management."

"We do not believe that either renter involved in the Las Vegas and New Orleans attacks had a criminal background that would have identified them as a security threat," Turo said in a statement Wednesday. "We are actively partnering with law enforcement authorities as they investigate both incidents."

In the first incident early Wednesday morning, 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Jabbar plowed a Ford pickup truck he rented on Turo into a crowd on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, killing at least 14 and injuring many others before being killed by police. Later that day, a man authorities believe to be 37-year-old Matthew Livelsberger parked a Tesla Cybertruck he had rented days earlier in Denver in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas. Seconds later, fuel canisters and fireworks packed into the truck's bed exploded, slightly wounding seven bystanders. The driver's badly burned body was later found with a gunshot wound, leading authorities to conclude Livelsberger shot himself.

Founded in 2009 by former Chief Executive Shelby Clark, privately held Turo operates in more than 16,000 cities and serves 3.5 million active guests. The app offers more than 1,600 makes and models of vehicles and has helped vehicle owners earn $4.8 billion since its inception, a company filing said.

The app works by connecting renters to car owners seeking to share their vehicle for a profit. Users can search for cars by location and communicate directly with owners to arrange a pickup. Owners set their daily rates, and there's a $15 minimum requirement for each trip.

According to the company's website, a user must have a valid driver's license, home address and payment card to rent a vehicle. Turo may also check a potential renter's credit report and criminal background, the website says.

The company said it was "heartbroken by the violence perpetrated" and employs "world-class" trust and safety protocols, including hiring former law enforcement professionals.

Turo claims to be the world's largest car-sharing marketplace and offers an alternative to traditional rental companies such as Hertz. Founded as a venture-capital-backed startup, the company filed paperwork to make an initial public offering in 2022 but has yet to go public.

Turo saw a $14.7-million profit in 2023 and $19 million over the first nine months of 2024, according to a filing. It faces some competition in the car-sharing space, including from the rental app Getaround, which uses a similar platform to connect owners and renters.

This is not the first time Turo vehicles have been associated with criminal activity. In 2021, a Houston woman was charged with committing a series of robberies, which she allegedly carried out using seven cars rented through Turo. Rentals from Turo and Getaround have also been stolen and involved in drug trafficking, according to NBC News.

Police have identified suspects in both New Year's Day attacks. After investigating a possible connection between the incidents, authorities said they believe the two men involved in the incidents each acted alone. The Cybertruck explosion was not due to a faulty vehicle, Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk said.

The owner of the pickup used in New Orleans told the New York Times that he recognized his vehicle on the news. He had been renting out five vehicles on Turo as a second income stream but will not use the platform anymore, he said.

Tesla annual sales fall for first time; analysts cite lack of new models

Company still leads EV market, but others have put out dozens of rival offerings in recent years.

By Russ Mitchell

Tesla sales declined for the first time in the company's history last year, the company reported Thursday, reflecting what analysts said was a lack of new models in an increasingly competitive market for electric vehicles.

Vehicle deliveries fell to 1.79 million, representing a drop of 1.1% from 1.81 million vehicles in 2023.

Tesla shares fell about 6% Thursday to $379.28.

Edmunds auto analyst Jessica Caldwell noted Tesla's core model lineup has seen few changes in recent years.

"Especially for EVs, you have to attract new buyers and returning buyers," she said. "In the EV market people want something new and fresh."

Beyond a news release listing quarterly and annual numbers, the company had no comment, although it will hold a public webcast on financial results Jan. 29. Chief Executive Elon Musk posted 25 comments on X on Thursday morning, 23 of them political but none about Tesla.

Musk's increasingly conservative politics and his alignment with Republican President-elect Donald Trump might also be a factor in left-leaning states such as California, its biggest U.S. market, Caldwell said.

"There are people with a negative image of Elon Musk and that's tainted the Tesla a bit."

Most of the sales decline occurred in the fourth quarter, ended Dec. 31, despite cut-rate financing deals offered by Tesla. Given the company's commanding lead in electric vehicle market share, slow or no growth at Tesla adds another challenge to California Gov. Gavin Newsom's zero-emission vehicle aspirations. The state is under his mandate to ban new sales of traditional gasoline-powered cars by 2035.

Tesla, once a darling of California electric vehicle buyers, has been taking hits in the Golden State, with sales down 3.5% in the third quarter, according to the state dealers trade group. Tesla itself doesn't break out numbers state by state. Fourth-quarter estimates from the California New Car Dealers Assn. will be available later this month.

Whether Tesla's drop indicates deeper trouble in the EV market in general will become clearer as other companies report their 2024 sales in coming days. The rapid growth in the market for electric vehicles has slowed as customers resist higher prices and balk at an inefficient public charging system.

Tesla once had the EV market almost entirely to itself, but that's no longer the case. The Ioniq 5 from Hyundai and the EV6 and EV9 from Kia are selling especially well. Dozens of models from other carmakers have been introduced in recent years, more than a dozen in 2024 alone from Volvo, Volkswagen, Cadillac, GMC, Polestar, Porsche and others.

The EV market could take a hit if Trump follows through on plans to eliminate the federal EV buyer tax credit of up to $7,500 a vehicle.

Alex Brandon Associated Press

TESLA CEO Elon Musk's increasingly conservative politics might have hurt sales, one auto analyst says.

Newsom has said he will seek to provide state tax credits should that happen, but his plan would exclude Tesla, given how much the state has already spent on Tesla subsidies. Despite slowing growth, Tesla remains by far the top seller of EVs in California and across the United States.

Jobless claims drop to lowest level since March

Number fell by 9,000 to 211,000 last week, Labor Department says. Four-week average also declined.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment checks dropped last week to the lowest level since March, suggesting that most U.S. workers continue to enjoy unusually high job security.

Jobless claims dropped by 9,000 to 211,000 last week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week average of claims, which strips out week-to-week ups and downs, fell by 3,500 to 223,250.

The overall number receiving unemployment benefits fell by 52,000 to 1.84 million, the lowest since September.

Thomas Simons and Sam Saliba, economists at Jefferies, called the drops "encouraging" in a commentary but cautioned that seasonal adjustments around the holidays can throw off the numbers.

The U.S. job market has cooled considerably from the red-hot hiring days of 2021 to 2023 when the economy was bounding back from COVID-19 lockdowns.

Through November, employers added an average of 180,000 jobs a month in 2024, down from 251,000 in 2023, 377,000 in 2022 and a record 604,000 in 2021. Still, even the diminished job creation is solid and a sign of resilience in the face of high interest rates.

Nam Y. Huh Associated Press

A STORE SIGN in Chicago in November. The total number of people in the U.S. receiving jobless benefits fell by 52,000 to 1.84 million, the lowest since September.

When the Labor Department releases hiring numbers for December on Jan. 10, they're expected to show that employers added 160,000 jobs last month.

The weekly jobless claims numbers are a proxy for layoffs, and those have remained below pre-pandemic levels. The unemployment rate is at a modest 4.2%, though that is up from a half-century low of 3.4% reached in 2023.

To fight inflation that hit four-decade highs 2½ years ago, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rates 11 times in 2022 and 2023. Inflation came down — from 9.1% in mid-2022 to 2.7% in November, allowing the Fed to start cutting rates. But progress on inflation has stalled in recent months, and year-over-year consumer price increases are stuck above the Fed's 2% target.

At its December meeting, the Fed cut its benchmark interest rate for the third time in 2024. But the central bank's policymakers signaled that they're likely to be more cautious about future rate cuts: They projected just two in 2025, down from the four they had envisioned in September.

Apple agrees to pay $95 million to settle Siri privacy lawsuit

Workers listened to private conversations, plaintiffs allege.

By Queenie Wong

Apple agreed to pay $95 million in cash to settle a lawsuit that alleges the tech giant recorded private conversations from people who used its voice assistant Siri without their consent.

The iPhone maker was sued in 2019 for allegedly violating users' privacy after the Guardian reported that contractors hired by the company to review Siri's responses to prompts heard recordings that included medical information, drug deals and couples having sex.

Apple apologized that year for the privacy breaches following consumer complaints and said it would no longer retain recordings of users' exchanges with Siri. In court filings, however, the company denied having overstepped users' rights, writing that "Apple denies all of the allegations made in the lawsuit and denies that Apple did anything improper or unlawful."

The company didn't respond to a request for comment about the settlement.

The allegations underscore problems tech companies are facing as people become increasingly reliant on voice assistants to answer questions, set alarms and find directions.

Filed on Tuesday in a federal court in California, the preliminary settlement also requires the iPhone maker to confirm that it permanently deleted Siri audio recordings collected before October 2019 and to publish a webpage that explains how users can opt in to improve Siri and what information Apple collects.

Tens of millions of Apple users could be eligible for money from the settlement by submitting claims for up to five devices that include Siri in which the voice assistant was unintentionally activated from Sept. 17, 2014, to Dec. 31, 2024, during a private or confidential conversation. The money received depends on how many valid claims are filed, according to the settlement.

Plaintiffs in the case estimated total damages to the class exceeded $1.5 billion, but they agreed to settle the lawsuit because obtaining "the total damages at trial would be a challenge, given Apple's denial of liability," the settlement said.

The settlement is pending approval from U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White.

Court tosses FCC's internet rules

JACQUELYN MARTIN Associated Press

LAST YEAR the FCC voted to formalize a national standard for internet service to prevent the blocking or slowing of information over broadband internet lines.

[**FCC,** from A1]
crat control — voted to formalize a national standard for internet service to prevent the blocking or slowing of information delivered over broadband internet lines. The core principle of open internet meant that internet service providers couldn't discriminate among content suppliers.

The order also would have given the FCC more oversight to demand that internet providers respond to service outages or security breaches involving consumers' data. The FCC cited national security, saying increased oversight was necessary for the commission to effectively crack down on foreign-owned companies that were deemed to be security threats.

But on Thursday, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Cincinnati, ruled that the five-member commission lacked the authority to reclassify broadband internet as a telecommunications service. The decision dismantles one of Biden's major technology initiatives.

In its ruling, the 6th Circuit referred to the FCC's net neutrality order as a "heavy-handed regulatory regime."

The court said a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling had removed a judicial framework that allowed courts to interpret rules with deference to the federal agency that created them. The 6th Circuit said the FCC did not have the statutory authority to change the classification of broadband internet to a telecommunications service. That role rests with Congress.

The case was brought by the Ohio Telecom Assn., a trade organization representing internet service providers.

FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel, who has long championed the net neutrality rules, called on lawmakers to take up the mantle in the wake of the court decision. She had shepherded the move to reinstate them during her tenure leading the agency and led the 3-2 party-line vote last year to restore the net neutrality rules.

"Consumers across the country have told us again and again that they want an internet that is fast, open, and fair," Rosenworcel said in a statement. "With this decision it is clear that Congress now needs to heed their call, take up the charge for net neutrality, and put open internet principles in federal law."

The regulatory climate has changed dramatically in recent years and is expected to shift again after Trump moves back into the White House. Trump's pick for FCC chairman, Brendan Carr, wrote a chapter on the FCC in the conservative policy blueprint Project 2025. Companies expect the commission under Carr to be more business-friendly.

"President Biden's entire plan rested on the Chicken Little tactic of persuading Americans that the Internet would break in the absence of these so-called 'net neutrality' regulations," Carr said in a statement. "The American people have now seen through that ruse."

The net neutrality dispute hinged on the degree to which the FCC could regulate broadband internet service providers under the authority the commission received from Congress in the landmark Communications Act of 1934 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

"We hold that Broadband Internet Service Providers offer only an 'information service' ... and therefore, the FCC lacks the statutory authority to impose its desired net-neutrality policies through the 'telecommunications service' provision of the Communications Act," the 6th Circuit judges wrote in their 26-page ruling.

Consumer groups, which lobbied for more than a decade for net neutrality regulations, lamented the decision.

"Today's decision represents a major setback for consumers, competition, and the Open Internet," John Bergmayer, legal director at Public Knowledge, said in a statement.

"In rejecting the FCC's authority to classify broadband as a telecommunications service, the court has ignored decades of precedent and fundamentally misunderstood both the technical realities of how broadband works and Congress' clear intent in the Communications Act."

Net neutrality has been a seesaw battle for more than 15 years.

In the early days of broadband penetration, major companies lined up on opposing sides. Google, Netflix and other tech companies joined with consumer groups calling for net neutrality rules to level the playing field with internet service providers such as AT&T, Verizon, Comcast Corp. or Charter Communications.

Supporters of net neutrality wanted those providers to be regulated under Title II of the landmark communications act, which would have given the FCC a greater enforcement role.

"Recall that the market's initial concern over Title II reclassification never had anything at all to do with net neutrality," cable analyst Craig Moffett wrote in a note to investors. Instead, investors in telecommunications stocks were worried that such reclassification would open a door "to broadband price regulation," Moffett wrote.

But that didn't happen.

"That risk is now put to bed," Moffett wrote.

MARKET ROUNDUP

Stocks open new year with more modest losses

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — U.S. stock indexes slipped Thursday as Wall Street's weak end to last year carried into 2025.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 0.2% to extend the four-day losing streak that dimmed the close of its stellar 2024. The index pinballed through the day between an early gain of 0.9% and a later loss of 0.9% before locking in its longest losing streak since April.

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 0.4% after an early gain of 360 points disappeared, and the Nasdaq composite lost 0.2%.

Tesla helped drag the market lower after disclosing it delivered fewer vehicles in the last three months of 2024 than analysts expected. The electric vehicle company's stock slumped 6.1%.

Tesla was one of the big winners of 2024, particularly after Donald Trump's November victory raised speculation that Chief Executive Elon Musk's close relationship with the president-elect could help the company. But critics have been warning that prices all across the stock market have run too high, too quickly and are at risk of a pullback.

Consider a measure tracked by Bank of America of how heavily Wall Street analysts are recommending stocks, which recently hit its highest level since early 2022, according to strategist Savita Subramanian. She says the measure has been a reliable contrarian indicator in the past, and it's only a bit shy of triggering a signal to sell for those who are leery when much of Wall Street herds in the same direction.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, H.B. Fuller sank 7.5% after the seller of adhesives, sealants and other specialty chemical products said it's recently seen a slowdown in sales to a number of its customer categories.

On the winning side of Wall Street were companies tied to the energy industry after prices rose for crude oil and natural gas.

Constellation Energy jumped 8.4% for the one of the biggest gains in the S&P 500 after announcing it won more than $1 billion in combined contracts with the U.S. General Services Administration to supply power and perform energy savings and conservation measures.

Some Big Tech stocks also helped limit the market's losses. Nvidia, whose chips are powering the world's move into artificial intelligence technology, rose 3% after following up its nearly 240% surge in 2023 with a better than 170% jump last year.

Some investors and analysts are counting on the AI rush to continue, even though critics say it has made stock prices too expensive. As the calendar flips to a new year, Wedbush analyst Dan Ives says it's the "same tech playbook in year 3 of this tech AI driven bull market," for example.

Some pages of the playbook do seem to be changing. Investors have ratcheted back expectations for how many cuts to interest rates the Federal Reserve will deliver in 2025, for example.

Inflation has remained stubbornly above the Fed's 2% target, and Trump's pushing for tariffs and other policies has raised worries about potentially more upward pressure on prices that U.S. consumers have to pay. That drove the Fed to say recently it will probably deliver fewer of the economy-juicing cuts to interest rates in 2025 than it had earlier thought.

Expectations for a string of such cuts were a major reason the S&P 500 set dozens of all-time highs last year. Until now, the economy has held up remarkably well despite the high rates brought by the Fed in recent years to stifle inflation.

Many investors expect the Fed to keep its main interest rate steady later this month, which would be the first meeting in four where it hasn't eased rates.

In the bond market, Treasury yields held relatively steady. The yield on the 10-year Treasury edged down to 4.56% from 4.57% late Tuesday after a report said fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week than economists expected. It's the latest signal that the job market remains solid.

All told, the S&P 500 slipped 13.08 points to 5,868.55. The Dow dipped 151.95 points to 42,392.27, and the Nasdaq composite lost 30.00 points to 19,280.79.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell 2.2% in Hong Kong and 2.7% in Shanghai after a survey of factory managers showed Chinese activity expanding at a slower pace in December.

Upbeat talk by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in a New Year's address did little to raise optimism among investors who are hoping for more aggressive action to support the world's second-largest economy and boost stock prices.

Major stock indexes

Index	Close	Daily change	Daily % change	YTD % change
Dow industrials	42,392.27	-151.95	-0.36	-0.36
S&P 500	5,868.55	-13.08	-0.22	-0.22
Nasdaq composite	19,280.79	-30.00	-0.16	-0.16
S&P 400	3,114.26	-6.68	-0.21	-0.21
Russell 2000	2,231.67	+1.51	+0.07	+0.07
EuroStoxx 50	4,917.88	+21.90	+0.45	+0.45
Nikkei (Japan)	39,894.54	-386.62	-0.96	0
Hang Seng (Hong Kong)	19,623.32	-436.63	-2.18	-2.18

Associated Press

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UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

In re The Roman Catholic Bishop of San Diego
Case No. 24-02202

Notice of Deadline for Filing Claims: FEBRUARY 3, 2025

YOU MAY HAVE A SEXUAL ABUSE CLAIM OR OTHER CLAIM AGAINST THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

On June 17, 2024, The Roman Catholic Bishop of San Diego, sometimes referred to as The Diocese of San Diego ("Debtor") filed for protection under chapter 11 of Title 11 of the United States Code (the "Bankruptcy Code").

If you were sexually abused by any person connected with Debtor, you must file a claim so as to be received by February 3, 2025, or otherwise you will be forever barred, estopped, and enjoined from asserting such claim against the Debtor. Even if you have already filed a lawsuit against Debtor alleging abuse you must still file a claim to maintain and/or preserve your rights.

Claims based on acts or omissions of the Debtor that occurred before June 17, 2024, must be filed on or before February 3, 2025, even if such claims are not now fixed, liquidated, or certain or did not mature or become fixed, liquidated, or certain before June 17, 2024.

For more information on how to obtain and file a proof of claim form and associated documents, please visit https://www.donlinrecano.com/rcbsd, or contact Donlin Recano, the Debtor's claims agent, via email at rcbsdinfo@drc.equiniti.com or by phone at 1-866-521-4424, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time), Monday through Friday.

OPINION

OP-ED

JOHN GIBBINS San Diego Union-Tribune

ROCIO REBOLLAR GOMEZ is consoled by a friend in Tijuana after being deported in 2020. She was allowed to return in 2021.

Plan to deport millions will fall far short

Many of the immigrants removed from the United States inevitably come back, driven by connections here and risks in their countries of origin

By Saúl Ramírez

Will President-elect Donald Trump's vow to "launch the largest deportation program in American history" truly keep millions of immigrants out of the country? My research on deportees over the last five years suggests it won't.

Here's why: They'll come back.

One of the migrants I interviewed was deported to a perilous town in northern Mexico, where he found himself in immediate danger on arriving at a bus terminal. Members of a criminal group demanded that he provide a *contraseña* — a password he didn't have — or face kidnapping. He ultimately borrowed $1,500 from a friend to pay them off, remain free and make his way back to the United States.

His experience is an example of the risks deportees face in their countries of origin. Those dangers — and the relative safety of the only homes they have — often motivate them to undertake harrowing journeys back to the United States.

Although data on deportees is somewhat limited, the evidence we have shows that people re-immigrate after deportation more frequently than many might expect. In fiscal 2020, for example, the federal government classified 40% of deportations as "reinstatements of removal," meaning the deportees had reentered the United States after being removed or ordered to leave. A 2019 report by the American Immigration Council, a pro-immigration advocacy group, similarly noted that such reinstatements of removal generally make up 40% of deportations annually. From 2011 to 2020, approximately 1.3 million deportations affected people who had been deported before.

That's because deportation policies are at best blunt instruments that take little account of the human lives they ensnare. Those who view mass deportation as a solution to unauthorized immigration ignore the deep roots, sense of belonging, family ties and resolve that drive people back to the country they call home.

Undeterred by deportation, people I've interviewed have found ways to return to the United States with or without permission. Their stories reveal the rarely discussed truth that deportation is not necessarily the end of migration; it is often a temporary, futile interruption.

I spoke to another man who was born in Mexico but raised in the United States, served in the military and struggled with post-traumatic stress. Because of a minor cannabis possession charge, he was deported to a country he barely remembered. In 2021, more than a decade after his exile, he returned to the only land he considers his own, the United States.

"You can travel the world," he told me, "but eventually, your heart and spirit will call you home."

Another Mexican-born, U.S.-raised military veteran I interviewed was also deported over a marijuana charge. Feeling "erased from existence," he risked his life to return less than a month later.

"I don't need a paper to tell me I'm an American," he told me.

These stories expose a fundamental flaw of mass deportation. In contrast to the cyclical migration patterns of earlier decades — when migrants, mostly men, moved back and forth between the United States and Mexico with relative ease in response to the labor market — today's cycle is driven by government coercion and unbreakable bonds. Forced departures lead to inevitable returns as deportees are pulled back by connections that no amount of enforcement can sever.

The coyotes who smuggle them have become part of what the anthropologist Jason De León calls a "border-security-industrial complex." If their illicit businesses were publicly traded, their stocks would be soaring on renewed demand. Meanwhile, border enforcement policies push migrants into treacherous terrain where they face dehydration, hypothermia and death in the desert.

For deportees, returning is an act not just of determination, but also of survival. Some are lucky enough to make it back, but as the Spanish saying goes, "*Tanto va el cántaro al agua hasta que se quiebra*": The pitcher goes to the well until it finally breaks. Deportation policies push people to take increasingly greater risks to return to the only homes they've ever known. The next attempt could always be their last.

Deportation may well become the defining issue of our era if we continue down this punitive path. When mass deportations fail, what will follow? Will we see modern-day versions of Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive order authorizing forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans, complete with "relocation centers"?

Under a very different executive order signed by President Biden in 2021, the Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs departments prioritized the return of deported U.S. military members and their families. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA, similarly sought to recognize longtime residents' ties to the country and restore their place in the American communities they call home.

Such policies live up to American ideals of justice and inclusion by embracing those who, in every meaningful way, already belong. Mass deportation would betray those values, put even more lives at risk and very often fail on its own terms.

SAÚL RAMÍREZ is a fellow at Harvard Law School and a doctoral candidate in sociology at Harvard.

LETTERS

NATHAN SOLIS Los Angeles Times

TRADER JOE'S will open three new grocery stores in Los Angeles. Above, the Trader Joe's on Colorado Boulevard in L.A.'s Eagle Rock neighborhood.

Where L.A. needs a TJ's

Re "Trader Joe's plans three new L.A. stores in 2025," Jan. 1

Yay! More Trader Joe's stores! But still, after 58 years, there are no locations where the demographics are a little more diverse? Nothing in known food deserts?

The article quotes company marketing executives on the Inside Trader Joe's podcast regarding criteria for new stores — population density, parking and accessibility — without taking a critical eye at the map. The only store in South L.A. is next to USC. There's nothing in East L.A. Don't the rest of us deserve access?

And while new Trader Joe's locations are news, I miss the L.A. Times that would report the whole story and not just publish an article that reads like a company press release.

JEANNETTE BRONSON, Los Angeles

Knocking state leaders off track

Re "Should we finish the bullet train?" letters, Jan. 2

I'm saddened that the worthy project of high-speed rail in California was mismanaged from the start.

The $11 billion that has already been spent should have gone toward starting the project in the Los Angeles or San Francisco Bay areas, facilitating commuting to these higher-salaried cities from lower-cost housing markets as an adjunct to addressing homelessness.

I also believe that California's Democratic Party politics increased high-speed rail's price tag. How much have union-enforced wage scales padded the project's costs? Did California's environmental lobby add roadblocks for an initiative that would actually reduce carbon emissions?

From my view here in Tennessee, California's management of this vital high-speed rail project exemplifies how Vice President Kamala Harris or Gov. Gavin Newsom would operate the U.S. government if elected president.

If California wants the rest of the nation to model its form of government, the state must demonstrate that it works — which, today, it doesn't.

JIM KENNEDY
Smyrna, Tenn.

A 'wokoso' on the Latino vote

Re "Latinos came of age with their votes in election," column, Dec. 31

Gustavo Arellano has an interesting viewpoint on the evolving politics of some Latino voters who favored President-elect Donald Trump over Vice President Kamala Harris. I guess that I fit into his category of the "wokoso."

My mind-set was created by the challenges of the Great Depression, the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, World War II, the labor movement and the racial attitudes behind signs saying, "No dogs or Mexicans allowed." Added to this was the activism of the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the murder of our idols John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Fast-forward to the post-baby boomer generations, and we have voters of Latino heritage influenced by the Reagan revolution, with its benign amnesty of the undocumented, recompense for incarcerated Japanese Americans and its underhanded dealing in Iran-Contra. More Latinos have been drawn into evangelical Christian churches with their Calvinist and dominionist theologies.

Finally, we can include the indoctrination of Fox News viewers and the ultra-conservative radio shows. This media ecosystem has the ability to convince viewers and listeners that a hot dog is filet mignon — and that Trump will be a great president.

ANTHONY AVILA
Whittier

::

As a fan of Arellano, I read with interest his column on Latinos coming of age politically in the November election but came away with two concerns.

I don't see how Latinos voting for Trump reconciles with the themes of Cesar Chavez's 1984 Commonwealth Club speech. Arellano says Chavez spoke of a "California 'dominated' by the descendants of farmworkers, who would change things for the better and never forget where they came from, generations later."

Regardless of why, voting in greater numbers for Trump and his vulgar, white-supremacist screeds seems to define forgetting where you came from.

Also, midway through the column, Arellano states that "2024 is the year that Latinos finally became Americans." Yet in the rest of the column he never references them as Americans, rather always as Latinos. And, it's done mostly in an us-versus-them context.

Identity politics is killing this country, and Arellano seems to be cheering the buy-in.

MITCH PARADISE
Los Angeles

Signed, however you write it

Re "Your vote counts with cursive," Jan. 2

Signatures don't have to be in cursive.

I gave up cursive in high school except for my signature, which deteriorated year after year until it was just a scrawl. After the registrar of voters flagged my signature as not matching its records, I decided to change. At my next driver's license renewal (and voter registration), I switched my signature to being to my printed name.

Your signature is whatever you say it is. Pick something you can maintain.

KATHERINE ALBITZ
San Diego

HOW TO WRITE TO US

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Inquiries into New Orleans, Vegas attacks

[**Links,** from A1]
Department Sheriff Kevin McMahill said.

The incidents left the nation shaken, in part because officials on Wednesday suggested the man who drove through Bourbon Street plowing down pedestrians might have had accomplices. On Thursday, they said that they are now confident he acted alone and that they are not searching for other suspects.

Shamsud-Din Jabbar, 42, drove a rented pickup truck bearing a flag of the extremist group Islamic State from Houston to New Orleans on New Year's Eve. Early on New Year's Day, officials say he drove the truck onto a sidewalk, going around a police car that was positioned to block vehicular traffic, authorities said.

The attack killed 14 and injured 35 others, officials said. Police killed Jabbar after he got out of the truck and opened fire on officers, authorities said.

Investigators found two explosive devices in coolers in New Orleans' French Quarter. Surveillance video showed Jabbar placing the items in the area several hours before the attack, according to the FBI.

Law enforcement sources told The Times that the devices appeared to be homemade pipe bombs with nails. The devices did not go off.

Jabbar was wearing body armor, law enforcement officials told The Times. Investigators recovered a handgun and an AR-style rifle after the shootout, a law enforcement official said. The official was not authorized to discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Jabbar joined the Army in 2007, serving on active duty in human resources and information technology and deploying to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, the service said. He transferred to the Army Reserve in 2015 and left in 2020 with the rank of staff sergeant.

Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, said Thursday that the FBI discovered five videos Jabbar posted online hours before the attack, in which he stated he had joined Islamic State before the summer. In one video, Jabbar explained that he originally planned to harm his family and friends but was "concerned the news headlines would not focus on the war between the believers and the disbelievers," Raia said.

GERALD HERBERT Associated Press

FBI SWAT team members arrive at the Superdome before the Sugar Bowl on Thursday after the New Year's attack in New Orleans.

"This was an act of terrorism," Raia said. "It was premeditated and an evil act."

In a video on YouTube, Jabbar said he was born in Beaumont, Texas, and worked in human resources and information technology while in the Army. He described himself as a property manager and real estate agent.

Officials are combing through data on three phones and two laptops linked to Jabbar to determine whether there are any other potential leads.

The FBI is also probing the explosion of fuel canisters and firework mortars packed into the bed of a Cybertruck outside President-elect Donald Trump's property near the Las Vegas Strip that killed the driver and left seven bystanders with minor injuries, officials said.

McMahill said authorities believe the driver was 37-year-old Matthew Livelsberger, but he cautioned that the body was burned beyond recognition so officials have not been able to positively identify him. However, authorities found military identification, credit cards and a passport with Livelsberger's name inside the vehicle, McMahill said at a news conference.

The driver sustained a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head before the blast. Two semiautomatic firearms, purchased by Livelsberger on Monday, were also found inside the vehicle, McMahill said.

The Cybertruck in the Las Vegas incident and the Ford F-150 Lightning pickup used in the New Orleans attack were rented through Turo.

A company spokesman said Turo is working with law enforcement, but that it does not believe that either renter "had a criminal background that would have identified them as a security threat."

Livelsberger rented the Cybertruck in Denver on Saturday and charged the vehicle at Tesla charging stations in Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona, McMahill said.

A traffic camera recorded the Cybertruck arriving in Las Vegas about 7:30 a.m. Wednesday. The truck traveled up and down the Strip for about an hour and spent some time in the parking lot of a business near Flamingo Road and Las Vegas Boulevard before pulling into the covered driveway outside the Trump International Hotel. The truck exploded about 17 seconds later, near the glass doors to the hotel's entrance, McMahill said.

The vehicle was caught on surveillance camera driving past the valet section of the hotel an hour before the incident, authorities said.

Investigators have not yet figured out how the fireworks and gas and camping fuel canisters in the back of the vehicle were ignited. Federal officials are trying to determine the motive in the blast.

Livelsberger, who was from the Colorado Springs area, was a master sergeant in the Army's elite Green Berets unit, according to an Army statement and his LinkedIn profile. He spent most of his time at Ft. Carson in Colorado and in Germany, where he was serving with the 10th Special Forces Group. He was on leave from Germany at the time of the explosion, McMahill said.

The blast did not cause significant damage to the body of the Cybertruck nor did it shatter the glass doors leading to the hotel lobby. Most of the material inside the vehicle was fuel to help cause a greater explosion, according to Kenny Cooper, a special agent in charge from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

"The level of sophistication is not what we would expect from an individual with this type of military experience," Cooper said.

Both Livelsberger and Jabbar previously served at the Army's Ft. Bragg, now known as Ft. Liberty, in North Carolina, but it is unclear whether they served at the same time or in the same unit. Both also served in Afghanistan in 2009, though officials say they don't have any evidence they were in the same location in the country or in the same unit, McMahill said.

Livelsberger entered active duty in the Army in December 2012 and was a candidate to be a Green Beret after serving in the Army Reserve and the National Guard, according to an Army spokesperson. His LinkedIn profile indicates that he became a remote and autonomous systems manager two months ago.

On Facebook, Livelsberger posted in drone hobby groups showing off his projects. He asked fellow enthusiasts about which parts to use as he put together his own custom machines.

He also criticized the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2021, calling it on social media the "biggest foreign-policy failure in the history of the United States."

The FBI, the ATF and the Colorado Springs Police Department served a search warrant Thursday morning at a home in Colorado Springs in connection with the explosion in Las Vegas. Federal authorities declined to provide additional details.

Investigators are looking into whether the driver deliberately targeted one of Trump's properties using a Tesla vehicle. Elon Musk, Tesla's chief executive, is a close advisor to the president-elect.

"There's investigative activity taking place literally around the globe," Las Vegas FBI Special Agent in Charge Spencer Evans said.

"At this particular time ... we have to focus on what we know and what we don't know. It's not lost on us that it's in front of the Trump building, that it's a Tesla vehicle, but we don't have information at this point that definitively tells us or suggests it's because of this particular ideology or any of the reasoning behind it."

Times staff writers Terry Castleman and Laura J. Nelson contributed to this report.

Friends, family remember victims in truck attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS — An 18-year-old girl dreaming of becoming a nurse, a single mother, a father of two and a former Princeton football star were among those who suffered fatal injuries when the driver of a white pickup truck sped down Bourbon Street, which was packed with holiday revelers.

Officials have not yet released the names of the 14 people killed in the New Orleans New Year's Day truck attack, but their families and friends have started sharing their stories. New Orleans Coroner Dr. Dwight McKenna said in a statement Wednesday that they will release the names of the dead once autopsies are complete and they've talked with the next of kin. About 30 people were injured.

MATTHEW HINTON Associated Press

ZION PARSONS, 18, talks about the death of friend Nikyra Dedeaux, 18, and the scene after a truck plowed into revelers along Bourbon Street in New Orleans.

Drew Dauphin

Christopher B. Roberts, president of Auburn University in Auburn, Ala., said on X that 2023 graduate Drew Dauphin died in the New Orleans attack.

"Words cannot convey the sorrow the Auburn Family feels for Drew's family and friends during this unimaginably difficult time," Roberts said. "Our thoughts are with the Dauphin family and the families of all the victims of this senseless tragedy."

Dauphin was a supplier process engineer at the American Honda Motor Co. in Birmingham, Ala., according to his LinkedIn profile.

Matthew Tenedorio

The parents of Matthew Tenedorio told NBC News that their son was one of the people killed in the attack.

"He was 25 years old. He was just starting life. He had the job of his dreams," Cathy Tenedorio said. "It's just very sad."

A GoFundMe page created by a cousin says he was an audiovisual technician at the Superdome.

"He was a wonderful kid," Louis Tenedorio added. "He loved people. He loved animals. He always had a smile. So many friends. He had so many friends."

Cathy Tenedorio said she had spent New Year's Eve with Matthew and another one of her sons.

"We had dinner and we did fireworks outside, and just laughing and hugging each other and telling each other we loved each other," she said. She added that they had tried to dissuade him from going into the city.

"They don't think about risk," she said.

Nikyra Dedeaux

Zion Parsons of Gulfport, Miss., had been celebrating New Year's Eve at his first night on Bourbon Street when a vehicle appeared and plowed into his friend, 18-year-old Nikyra Dedeaux, who he said had dreamed of becoming a nurse.

"A truck hit the corner and comes barreling through throwing people like in a movie scene, throwing people into the air," Parsons, 18, told the Associated Press. "It hit her and flung her like at least 30 feet and I was just lucky to be alive."

As the crowd scattered in the chaos, he ran through a gruesome aftermath of bleeding and maimed victims, hearing gunshots and explosive sounds.

"Bodies, bodies all up and down the street, everybody screaming and hollering," Parsons said. "People crying on the floor, like, brain matter all over the ground. It was just insane, like the closest thing to a war zone that I've ever seen."

Dedeaux was a responsible daughter — the one who helped take care of everyone, Parsons said. Dedeaux had a job at a hospital and was set to start college and begin working toward her goal of becoming a registered nurse.

"She had her mindset — she didn't have everything figured out, but she had the plan laid down," Parsons said.

Reggie Hunter

A 37-year-old father of two from Baton Rouge, Reggie Hunter had just left work and headed to celebrate New Year's with a cousin when the attack happened, his first cousin Shirell Jackson told Nola.com.

Hunter died and his cousin was injured, Jackson said.

Tiger Bech

A former high school and college football player from Louisiana was among those who died, according to an education official.

Tiger Bech, 27, died late Wednesday morning at a New Orleans hospital, according to local media outlets citing Kim Broussard, the athletic director at St. Thomas More Catholic High School in Lafayette. Bech attended the high school, where he played wide receiver, quarterback, punt returner and defensive back, NOLA.com reported.

Bech played football at Princeton University before graduating in 2021. Most recently he was working as an investment trader at a New York brokerage firm.

Marty Cannon, STM principal and former Bech coach, said he was an incredibly talented football player, but also charismatic and intelligent. After graduating from Princeton and working in the city, he regularly returned to visit his tight-knit family, close friends and people at the school. He was home over Christmas.

"We live in a relatively small community here where not a lot of people leave but many do," Cannon said. "I'm not surprised at all that Tiger could take off from south Louisiana and go off and get an amazing education at a place like Princeton and then lock himself into a community up there and just flourish. He's that kind of guy."

Princeton football coach Bob Surace said Wednesday that he had been texting with Bech's father, sharing memories of the player, who was a school kick returner and receiver from 2017 to 2019. He earned All-Ivy League honors as a returner.

Nicole Perez

Nicole Perez was a single mother to a 4-year-old son working hard to make life better for her family when she was killed, according to her employer.

Perez, who was in her late 20s, was recently promoted to manager at Kimmy's Deli in Metairie, La., and "was really excited about it," deli owner Kimberly Usher said in a phone interview with the AP. Usher confirmed Perez's death through her sister, who also works for her.

Usher said Perez would walk in the morning to the deli, which opened at breakfast time, and would ask lots of questions about the business side of the operations. She was permitted to bring her son, Melo, to work, where during breaks she taught him basic learning skills.

"She was a really good mom," said Usher, who started a GoFundMe account to cover Perez's burial costs and to help with expenses for her son that "he will need to transition into a new living situation," the donation request says.

CALIFORNIA

Photographs by ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

KAREN O'LAUGHLIN, right, and her son Trevor Hillegas at the Laramie House, a congregate living home whose funding is in danger.

Homes for quadriplegics face a struggle

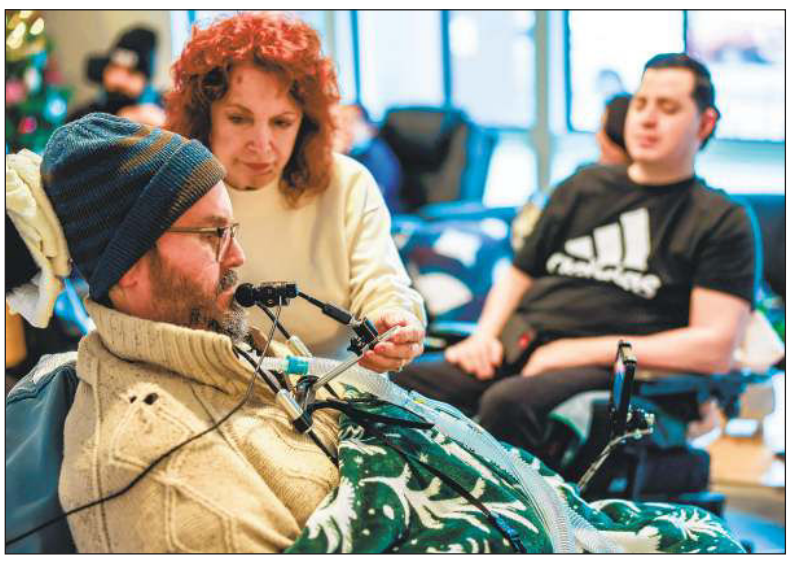
Proposition 35's passage has unraveled plans for the state to give a long-awaited raise to certain living facilities.

BY EMILY ALPERT REYES

Luis Cervantes chose to move home after recovering from a car accident that made him a quadriplegic.

But the 29-year-old found it uncomfortable to ask his mother and sister to help him with physical needs. He stopped going with them on outings from their Sylmar home because it was too much work. Cervantes ended up grappling with suicidal thoughts and landed in the hospital again, suffering a urinary tract infection.

He decided against returning home, but was dissatisfied during his months at a nursing facility. By then, he had heard about Laramie House, a little-known kind of home called a congregate living health facility.



MARY JANE TRIFON assists Tyler Smith, left, a 42-year-old father of twins at the Chatsworth facility. At rear is Angel Bustos.

The six-bed site in Chatsworth provides day-to-day medical care to assist mentally alert people who rely on ventilators, are quadriplegic or have other kinds of serious needs, but in a small setting that feels like a suburban home.

"I've been fighting to get into this place since I found out about it," said Cervantes, who moved in this fall.

Such facilities were born decades ago in the San Fernando Valley, the brainchild of a nurse tending to quadriplegic patients. And for decades, their operators say they have relied on the same level of payments from the state — a situation that they say clouds their future.

[See **Quadriplegics,** B5]

CHP stops 'next level monkey business'

Driver is arrested with four large containers of weed and a little primate, agency says.

BY CLARA HARTER

California Highway Patrol officers were floored by the "next level monkey business" they discovered inside a speeding Rolls-Royce Ghost in Madera County on Monday night: five cellphones, four large containers of weed and a 1-month-old spider monkey wearing a onesie, according to the agency.

Not only is it illegal to own primates as pets in California, but it's also especially dangerous to own a baby spider monkey, experts say. The young primates, which are endangered, require constant supervision and skilled care to survive.

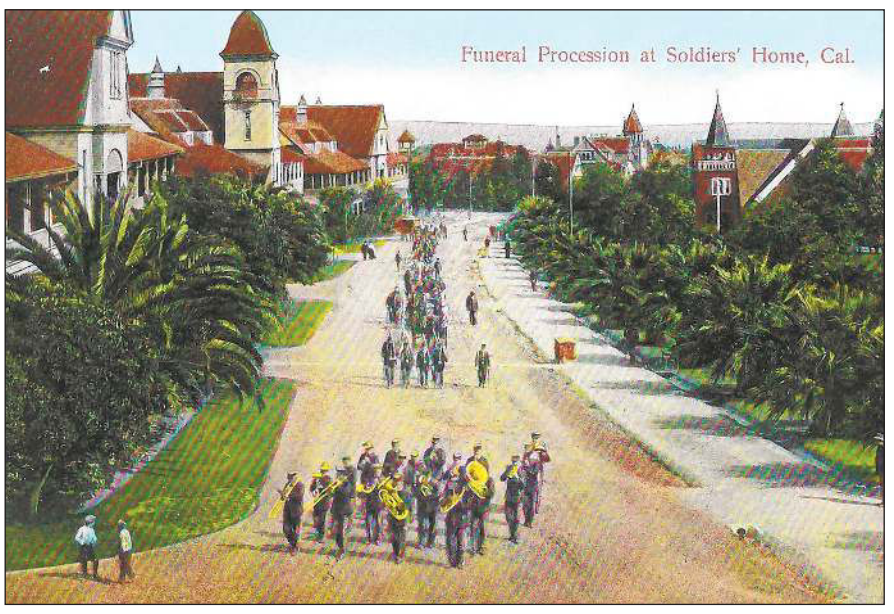
The driver of the luxury vehicle — which retails new starting at more than $350,000 — was pulled over for speeding northbound on California 99 north of Avenue 17 near the city of Madera, according to the CHP. He was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence, possession of an exotic animal and possession of cannabis for sale.

He was identified as Ali

[See **Monkey,** B2]

Madera County Animal Services

OFFICERS found this spider monkey after stopping a man suspected of speeding near Madera, Calif.



From the collection of Patt Morrison

A FUNERAL procession at the Soldiers' Home is depicted on this vintage postcard. The land was set aside for disabled and destitute veterans in 1888.

The complex history of the West L.A. VA campus

A classic fight over land highlights a paradox as the city tries to find housing for its veterans

PATT MORRISON

Isn't this just a classic Los Angeles story?

Fighting over land — who had it, who has it now, who'll get it?

Right now it's a fight in a courtroom, over who should have the right and the duty to decide the destiny of the hundreds of acres of the federal Veterans Affairs department's West L.A. campus. For those of you who are new to this place, this is some of the juiciest land in the juicy neighborhood of Westwood.

By L.A.'s yardstick of history, its story goes way back, like Queen-Victoria and first-movie-camera far back, to when it was first dedicated to the nation's suffering soldiery, and then back a century before then.

First, long before that, the Spanish and Mexicans wrested it away from the Native Americans. Then, the Yankees wangled and wooed it away from the Spanish and Mexicans. Then, in 1888, its acres were set aside for disabled and destitute veterans.

The first Civil War soldier to move in was a private from New York, and so eager was he that he pitched a tent, unwilling to wait for the wooden barracks to be finished. Some of the many fanciful gingerbread buildings that arose

[See **Morrison,** B4]

Sheriff's agency endures a 'Y2K' moment

Computer dispatch system suffers crash, forcing L.A. County deputies to pivot.

BY KERI BLAKINGER

A few hours before the ball dropped on New Year's Eve, the computer dispatch system for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department crashed, rendering all patrol car computers nearly useless and forcing deputies to handle all calls by radio, according to officials and sources in the department.

Department leaders first learned of the problem around 8 p.m. Tuesday, when deputies at several sheriff's stations began having trouble logging onto their patrol car computers, officials told The Times in a statement.

The department said it eventually determined its computer-aided dispatch program — known as CAD — was "not allowing personnel to log on with the new year, making the CAD inoperable." It was still inoperable as of midday Thursday, officials confirmed.

It's not clear how long it will take to fix the problem, but in the meantime deputies and dispatchers are handling everything old-school — using their radios instead of patrol car computers.

"It's our own little Y2K," a deputy who was working Wednesday morning told The Times.

The deputy, along with three other department sources who spoke to The Times about the problem, asked not to be named because they were not authorized to speak on the record and feared retaliation.

"Now, the call takers have to write down all the information for each call and then the dispatch has to voice all the details and the patrol unit has to write it all down," the deputy said. "They don't have the ability to run people or plates. They can't pull report numbers to give to people, so they have to call dispatch."

None of that affects whether deputies are able to do their jobs, the deputy said, but "it's just making everyone's job more difficult."

Officials said that deputies' body-worn cameras can still record, and department emails are working normally.

"We are still responding to calls for service and they are being tracked manually at the station level," the department said. "Additionally, our radio communications and our 911 lines are fully functional."

This isn't the first time in recent years the department has been forced to handle calls in an old-fashioned way. Some deputies said they were used to going back to "self-dispatch" and handling calls by radio when the system goes down for maintenance — but that those outages are typically planned and short.

"Not like this," said the deputy working Wednesday morning.

The timing of the malfunction has sparked a degree of concern among deputies.

One told The Times it was a "scary" problem to grapple with on the day of the Rose Bowl football game and Rose Parade. Others said that given the age of the system, the outage wasn't

[See **Dispatch,** B4]

SPORTS ON THE BACK: Rams rookie Verse, three Chargers earn Pro Bowl invites. **B10**

CHP detains little monkey to care for it

California Highway Patrol

A CHP OFFICER arrests a driver on suspicion of driving under the influence, possession of an exotic animal and possession of cannabis for sale near Madera, Calif., on Monday. Officials found a new home for the monkey.

[**Monkey,** from B1]

Mused Adel Mohamed and booked at the county jail, a spokesperson for the Madera County Sheriff's Office confirmed.

As for the monkey? He has a new home and a new nickname.

On Tuesday, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife brought the monkey to the Oakland Zoo, which specializes in providing sanctuary and care for exotic animals confiscated across the state. These include African lions, tigers, gibbons, macaws, chimpanzees, parrots, goats, sheep, rabbits, reptiles and more.

"We really want to deter people from participating in the pet trade like this, because it's clearly illegal and it's not good for animals to be raised with unqualified care," said Fish and Wildlife Capt. Nathan Smith. "Many of the spider monkeys we see are malnourished due to a lack of understanding of dietary and medical needs."

In the wild, spider monkeys are taken care of by their mother for their first two years of life, he said. People who take them as illegal pets often underestimate the level of constant attention they need and fail to give them enough milk, he said.

Smith said the illegal trade of exotic animals, including spider monkeys, is a growing problem in California.

The confiscated monkey is now in the care of skilled zookeepers, but officers initially found themselves in a predicament Monday night after making the arrest and realizing there was nowhere open to bring the monkey.

The arresting officer valiantly volunteered to take the primate home and care for it overnight.

On Tuesday morning, he dropped the monkey off at Madera County Animal Services, where staff nicknamed the monkey Marcel after Ross Geller's pet monkey in the sitcom "Friends."

Amy Toler, director of Madera County Animal Services, spent Monday morning caring for the monkey while waiting for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to come pick it up.

Marcel is the first spider monkey confiscated in Madera County, Toler said, so she phoned the nearby Fresno Chaffee Zoo and asked for advice on the monkey's care.

"It was just a matter of keeping the monkey warm against me with a blanket," she said. "We fed it mashed banana and gave it water. It did have a diaper that was changed."

Toler said she enjoyed her quiet morning swaddling the monkey and was happy it would receive the care it needs at the Oakland Zoo.

Temecula woman fends off violent kidnapping attempt

Victim says her former housekeeper lured her into a trap with a fake toy drive.

By Karen Garcia

What was meant to be a quick errand to help support a holiday toy drive turned into a brutal attack and possible kidnapping for one Temecula woman just days before Christmas.

The bizarre episode began on Dec. 18 when Temecula resident Erin Quinn got a text message asking her to pick up toys for a Christmas toy drive.

That Wednesday morning, Quinn received the text message from an unknown number with a 213 area code who claimed to be an elderly woman named Connie, KTLA-TV reported.

Through text messages, Quinn was told to meet the supposed toy donor in an unincorporated area of Riverside County known as Winchester, at a home on Memory Lane.

When Quinn arrived at the home, she got out of the car, left it unlocked, and went to the front door but no one answered, KABC-TV reported.

She got another text message, from the same number, telling her to wait in the car and the elderly woman's caregiver would take the gifts outside.

"I was completely set up [there were no presents] and when I got back into my vehicle, I had no idea someone was waiting for me," Quinn wrote on a GoFundMe page that was created by a friend to help raise funds for her medical and mental health bills and repairs to her damaged car.

Quinn did not respond to a Times request to comment.

Back in the driver's seat, Quinn was immediately attacked from the back seat by an unidentified woman wearing a blond wig, according to news reports.

Quinn said her hair was pulled, she was shocked multiple times on her head and forced to drive.

During the nearly 30-minute assault, Quinn told KTLA that her attacker threatened to go after her children and mother.

In self-defense, Quinn kicked her attacker and "in a complete panic" bit a portion of her finger off, "because I didn't know what else to do," Quinn wrote on the GoFundMe account.

Quinn said she tried to get help by getting the attention of anyone in the surrounding area.

"Several construction workers around the area witnessed what was going on, videotaped and did nothing," she wrote.

At one point Quinn crashed into two cars, and while fighting off her attacker, pulled off the wig and identified her assailant as her former housekeeper, Olga Mendez, KABC reported.

A bystander finally intervened, pulling Mendez off Quinn, but her attacker fled the scene.

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department issued a news release, saying that deputies initially investigated the incident as a domestic dispute but learned quickly that it was a kidnapping attempt and an assault. Responding sheriff's deputies took Quinn to a hospital for treatment of her injuries.

Quinn told ABC she and Mendez had parted ways on good terms about four years ago.

"I strongly believe that her plan was to kidnap me and take me to Mexico for either ransom or sale," she said on the GoFundMe page.

Authorities arrested the 44-year-old Mendez in Paramount, 10 days after the assault.

Mendez was booked into Cois Byrd Detention Center on suspicion of kidnapping, assault with a deadly weapon, criminal threats and two unrelated warrants, according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

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San Diego Zoo receives Rose Parade's top honor

Its float, featuring depictions of two giant pandas, wins the Sweepstakes Award.

By Hailey Branson-Potts

Allen J. Schaben Los Angeles Times

THE SAN DIEGO ZOO took the Sweepstakes Award for the second year in a row for its colorful float, "Friendship Across the Earth."

The San Diego Zoo float took top honors in the 136th Rose Parade on Wednesday, winning the Sweepstakes Award for "most beautiful entry" for the second year in a row.

This year's float, "Friendship Across the Earth," featured depictions of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, the giant panda pair from China who made their public debut at the zoo in August.

Yun Chuan, a 5-year-old male, and Xin Bao, a 4-year-old female, were the first pandas to be sent to the U.S. in two decades.

On the float, which was designed by Azusa-based Artistic Entertainment Services and stood more than 50 feet tall, the panda replicas were surrounded by real shoots of black bamboo. They were joined by likenesses of the zoo's red pandas, Lucas and Adira, as well as a Malayan tiger named Connor.

"Giant pandas have an extraordinary ability to unite us," said Paul A. Baribault, president and chief executive of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, said in a statement.

"The symbolic presence of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao at the Rose Parade, a storied New Year's tradition, celebrates the power of nature and conservation as a unifying force."

The Tournament of Roses awarded official honors to two dozen floats. The awards and their sponsors are as follows:

■ Americana award: Elks U.S.A

■ Animation award: City of Burbank

■ Bob Hope Humor award: Boys & Girls Club

■ Crown City Innovator award: La Cañada Flintridge

■ Director award: Explore Louisiana

■ Extraordinaire award: One Legacy Donate Life

■ Fantasy award: City of South Pasadena

■ Founder award: Downey Rose Float Assn.

■ Golden State award: Sierra Madre Rose Float Assn.

■ Grand Marshal award: Love 2 Yeu

■ International award: Coding for Veterans

■ Isabella Coleman award: City of Hope

■ Judges award: The UPS Store Inc.

■ Leishman Public Spirit award: Cal Poly Universities

■ Mayor award: City of Alhambra

■ Past President award: Visit Mississippi

■ President award: Western Asset

■ Princess award: City of Torrance

■ Queen award: Shriners Children's

■ Showmanship award: Trader Joe's

■ Sweepstakes award: San Diego Zoo

■ Theme award: Pasadena Humane/Hill's Pet Nutrition

■ Tournament Volunteer award: Rotary

■ Wrigley Legacy award: Kaiser Permanente

Last year, the San Diego Zoo's float, "It Began With a Roar," also won the Sweepstakes Award. It featured an enormous model of a lion named Rex.

2026 races are heating up in Latino-heavy O.C. districts

Several Democrats have announced bids for state Senate and Assembly seats.

By Gabriel San Román

A few days after the Orange County Registrar of Voters certified the November elections last month, a flurry of Democratic politicians were already turning their attention toward 2026 races.

The state Senate and Assembly contests that are quickly heating up are centered in Anaheim and Santa Ana, where the electorate is largely Latino and Democrat.

Because of that, whoever leads the June 2, 2026, statewide primary election is largely seen as the victor come that November, since Republican candidates are not expected to be competitive.

"What's going to be determined in these races is what Latino politics will largely look like in the course of the next decade," said Mike Madrid, author of "The Latino Century: How America's Largest Minority is Transforming Democracy" and a senior fellow at UC Irvine's School of Social Ecology.

"The centrist Democrat model is one that's been around since Rep. Lou Correa won seats in the Assembly and Senate during the '90s. The new model is more left-leaning."

In looking to continue his meteoric ascent in electoral politics, Democratic Assemblyman Avelino Valencia announced his candidacy for the 34th Senate District, a seat currently held by state Sen. Tom Umberg, whowill be termed out of office in 2026.

Valencia commented on his reasons for running, which include a desire to improve schools and build housing.

"Serving in the state Senate will give me an opportunity to make an even bigger impact on our Orange County communities," Valencia said. "This senate district shouldn't be viewed as a consolation prize or a stepping stone. Our district is home to nearly one million Orange County residents, and we deserve to have a responsive, committed and effective advocate."

Valencia bested Bulmaro "Boomer" Vicente, a progressive Democrat, during a primary election in 2022 on his way to winning the 68th Assembly District. As an incumbent, he handily won reelection in November 2024.

Through legislation, he has gained a reputation as a "good government" reformer, which has softened the edge of some of his most ardent progressive critics.

Valencia, who previously served on the Anaheim City Council, pushed for a state audit of Visit Anaheim, the city's tourism bureau, after allegations of a grafting scheme were detailed in an independent corruption report he voted to commission as a councilman.

Prompted by the Andrew Do scandal, he also backed legislation requiring a majority vote from the Orange County Board of Supervisors before any discretionary funds are allocated to a nonprofit or community group.

He also championed legislation that disallows campaign funds to be used for legal defense if a politician is convicted of certain felony crimes.

Fresh off his narrow defeat to Republican Steven Choi in the 37th Senate District, former state Sen. Josh Newman is eyeing a return to Sacramento through the 34th Senate District.

He is proud of his existing record — including revamping textile recycling programs, chairing the Senate Committee on Education and securing funds for groups such as Access California Services, which is based in Anaheim.

There are still plenty of outstanding issues, in Newman's estimation.

"California is facing some substantial challenges around housing affordability, access to care and access to higher education," Newman said. "There is important work to be done, including transitioning to clean energy sources in the face of climate change."

In order to run for the district, which is centered in Anaheim but stretches from South Whittier to Santa Ana, Newman would have to move, which already has triggered criticisms from those who see him as opposing Valencia as the Anaheim-raised "homegrown" candidate.

Newman reminds voters that he has represented areas of Anaheim before, when the former 29th Senate District overlapped with the currently drawn boundaries of the 34th Senate District.

"I've represented that area longer than anybody who is in the Legislature right now," he said.

Valencia's state Senate candidacy opened up another race for his 68th Assembly District seat that is already heating up and could prove to be more of a pitched battle over the future of O.C. Latino politics.

"There is overwhelming evidence that there is a Latino shift towards more populist politics," Madrid said. "The question is which strain of populism will be a definitive feature of Latino politics. Orange County may be the first place we start to really see it in a way where it's going to be contestable."

Santa Ana Councilman David Peñaloza has announced his campaign for Valencia's Assembly seat. He already counts the backing of Valencia, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Santa Ana Mayor Valerie Amezcua.

His campaign has started off with an economically focused message.

"We've seen how many Californians are fleeing the state for economic reasons," Peñaloza said. "The quality of life has also declined in the last 10 years. A sense of safety is just not there. That's broken for many working families in the state."

In the last six years on the Santa Ana City Council, Peñaloza has taken a moderate position on issues concerning development, police, homelessness and crime in the city.

"My focus has been how can we, at the same time, make life less expensive for residents in Santa Ana but also safe," he said. "I'm a big proponent of parks and libraries. At the same time, people are upset that we are opening up these new amenities because of safety concerns. It's a revolving circle of issues that our community has to deal with."

Peñaloza may face off with his Santa Ana City Council colleague Jessie Lopez, who is said to be a potential candidate in the race.

When reached by phone, Lopez said she is taking a "strong look" at the Assembly district, but hasn't announced any run.

As a councilwoman, Lopez has a record of backing progressive policies geared toward Santa Ana's working-class residents, including rent control, eviction protectionsand supporting direct economic assistance to residents during the pandemic.

Lopez beat a recall election last year, in which she was outspent 8 to 1 by her opponents.

She also won reelection to Santa Ana City Council in November, edging out a victory in Ward 3, the city's most moderate electorate.

San Román writes for Times Community News.

Bird flu infects more cats; L.A. County reiterates raw-food warning

Monarch-branded poultry products are recalled after samples test positive for H5Nl.

By Susanne Rust

After another raw pet food recall and a cluster of H5N1 bird-flu-infected cats, Los Angeles county public health officials are re-upping their warning to pet owners: Stop feeding your dogs and cats raw pet food.

A recall has been issued on San Jacinto-based Monarch Raw Pet Food, whose raw poultry products are sold at several farmers markets in California. The recall came after H5N1 bird flu was detected in product samples.

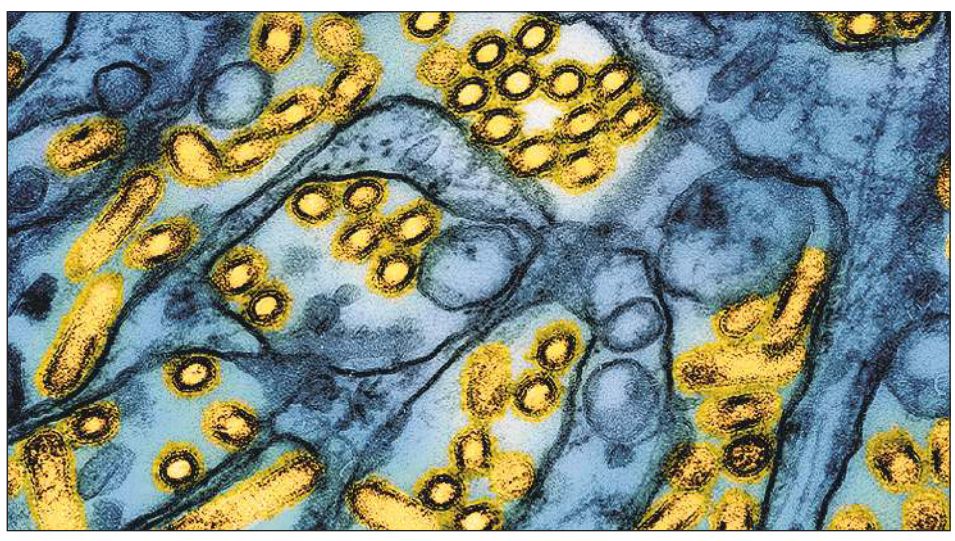
At least one cat in the county has tested positive for the virus after consuming the pet food. Four other cats, from the same household, were also presumed infected.

Two of the cats have died. The remaining three were quarantined and treated and have been returned home.

The cats' symptoms "ranged from lethargy and respiratory (coughing and sneezing) to neurologic symptoms and eye illness," said Becky Schlikerman Sernik, a public health spokeswoman.

The company's website makes no mention of the recall. It does, however, tout that its products are made from "human grade USDA free-range poultry that is raised in the San Joaquin Valley."

In November, a 350,000-bird commercial egg-laying operation in Riverside County was infected with the bird flu and depopulated, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since 2022, nearly 22 million birds in California have been infected or depopulated as a result of the outbreak.



National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

A COLORIZED electron microscope image of H5N1 particles. At least one cat in L.A. County has tested positive for the virus after eating Monarch-branded food.

Public health officials are urging residents who may have fed their pets Monarch raw products or other raw meat or dairy products, and who may have noticed their pet acting peculiar — lethargic, loss of motor control, drooling, etc. — to immediately contact their veterinarian. People should also avoid consuming raw milk or raw meat products.

Monarch's website lists the farmers markets where it sells its products.

The announcement comes on the heels of several warnings regarding pet cats and bird flu in the county. In early December, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health confirmed H5 bird flu in four house cats from a separate household that consumed recalled raw milk and became sick and died. That case is part of an ongoing investigation.

There have been no human cases of bird flu identified yet as associated with exposure to these cats.

VA campus in West L.A. has a winding history

[**Morrison,** from B1] there were supposedly designed by the scandalously famous architect Stanford White and bore a resemblance to the Hotel del Coronado, which opened the same year.

(Of all of these, only the historic 1900 Wadsworth chapel still stands, and by the skin of its teeth; millions are needed to bring it back to a state fit for so singular a historic building.)

These veterans had already done their share of fighting over land, battling across Northern states and Southern states — the United States versus the Confederate States, the land of the freed versus the land of the enslaved.

About six weeks before the Civil War and his own life ended, Abe Lincoln created a system of national homes for disabled U.S. soldiers, and in time, this Westwood land, about 600 acres of it, became the system's westernmost outpost.

Over four abattoir years, almost a third of a million of the Union's "boys in blue" had been wounded — not all of them catastrophically, but so many unwell enough in mind or body that they had no work and couldn't do any, and had no home and couldn't find one.

And then, here it was, awaiting them, Southern California, the lustrous edge of the continent, promising care and the company of comrades. First came the blue-suited Yankees. Hundreds of them marched — marched — down from Northern California to this new billet.

In time it welcomed the Rough Riders and their fellows, the World War I doughboys, the GI Joes of the "good war," the not-a-war-but-a-conflict Korean veterans, the grunts and jarheads of Vietnam and Iraq and Afghanistan.

The thing about the national homes is that they weren't only places for charity and mercy; they were, to the towns outside their gates, a business. Civic eagerness to land these homes was like today's competition for amusement parks or mega-corporations.

These ex-servicemen would need food, sundries, smokes — hundreds of things, and thousands in pension dollars landed in their pockets, right? On one Saturday in 1904, $80,000 arrived in the Westwood old soldiers' accounts. Surely some of this would find its way beyond the gates and into the towns?

So there were offers aplenty to welcome these veterans' homes, dozens of them. The whole of Santa Catalina Island was offered up. The winner was a carrot-and-stick combo, a donation not only made from the goodness of the heart but one that was good for the bottom line.

A formidable trio of landowners — one of them the philanthropist Arcadia Bandini Stearns de Baker, heiress to lands by birth and by marriage; her husband; and a Nevada senator — had founded Santa Monica in the 1870s. Eventually their gifts added up to about 600 acres for a place that would help the veterans, and help to put Santa Monica and the future town of Sawtelle on the map.

And so the Disabled Soldiers' Home arose on the land, with a rich water supply and a $100,000 gift from the land donors that made the place into a vast, ornamentally gardened neighborhood of splendid trees set along artistically meandering paths, and the less flashy greenery of vegetable and fruit gardens.

It may have looked like paradise, but it could hardly always live up to its landscaping.

The place had running water, a bakery, a library and a small theater — but it was a regulated life all the same, a barracks system with officers, uniforms, curfews and summons to meals and musters.

And no drinking. As many as 3,000 men at a time lived here, and for men in pain of one kind or another, worldly distractions beckoned — not just cigars and magazines, but fleshly delights.

The Times described these in March 1904 with lubricious gusto:

"With wolfish eagerness, a horde of thugs, gamblers, prostitutes and sellers of evil liquors lay in wait yesterday, at the very gates of the Soldiers' Home for the pension money paid in large amounts to the old veterans last Saturday." Two men leaving a "gambling hell" were beaten and robbed within arm's reach of the gates. Liquor of every ferocity and quality lasted as long as the money held out, and bordellos were a way station on wild nights on the town.

Liquored-up veterans could be disciplined or fined or even expelled from the regimented Eden. One ex-soldier was dishonorably discharged from the Soldiers' Home for running a gambling parlor just outside the gates. He was given the choice of shutting down his business instead, but he opted for the boot — he was making way too much money on the outside to give it up.

In April 1927, years into the national dry spell called Prohibition, the governor of the home was enforcing rules against drunkenness "and other vices." In consequence, threats to "burn [him] out" were no pranks over margarine: nine arson fires in a few weeks. Four years later, thoughtfully but perhaps unhelpfully, a federal judge decreed that 28 bottles of champagne seized from a drugstore not far from the Soldiers' Home be donated to the old fellows.

When these men died, aged before their years, many were buried in the national cemetery to the east of the Soldiers' Home, now divided from it by the 405 Freeway. The Times often published the lists of their names and regiments, like a phantom roll call: the 121st Ohio, the 11th Indiana, the 29th Michigan, the 17th Kansas, the 10th Wisconsin.

But there were also enough accounts of unsettling deaths, by suicide or "accident," to make you wonder about the unreported ones, and the iceberg depths of damage beyond Minié balls and bayonets.

A hundred years before there was a precise name for it, the symptoms were unmistakable. The gore and dismemberment of Civil War weaponry left these men with nightmarish problems that we would nowadays label PTSD.

The Civil War's close-range battles and grislier gun technology meant whole masses of men were cut down, "showering survivors with the blood, brains, and body parts of their comrades," the Smithsonian magazine wrote in 2015. "Many soldiers regarded the aftermath of battle as even more horrific, describing landscapes so body-strewn that one could cross them without touching the ground."

In December 1902, an old soldier, said to be mortally ill, cut his own throat on a street in Sawtelle and died a couple of weeks later. About the same time, a Missouri infantryman and musician in the home's band fell back into the sodden embrace of booze after years of sobriety, went back to his barracks and swallowed hydrochloric acid. Once in a while, a veteran wandered or fell onto the trolley tracks and didn't hear or chose not to hear the warning clang of the bell of an approaching train.

The happier stories got more play, naturally. One evening in the autumn of 1903, an old soldier strolling a Sawtelle street heard someone say the surname "Russell."

The two men were indeed brothers: John and Henry. John, the elder, lit out for the West in 1857, wound up in Illinois, joined the Union Army for the duration and beyond, and came to Sawtelle in 1900. Henry, the younger, left home at 13 for no place in particular and he, too, fought in the Civil War, settled in Arizona and moved to Sawtelle in 1894. The two had not seen each other in 47 years. Like so many L.A. stories, it took this detached pair the long trip to California to find each other.

As the mechanics of warfare changed, the home's work changed. By the early 1960s, the Wadsworth hospital and residences were dealing with more than 4,500 patients, as they were now called, and an additional 2,500 at the neuropsychiatric hospital on the grounds. The 1971 Sylmar quake put an end to the old hospital, and a new complex on both sides of Wilshire Boulevard rose up.

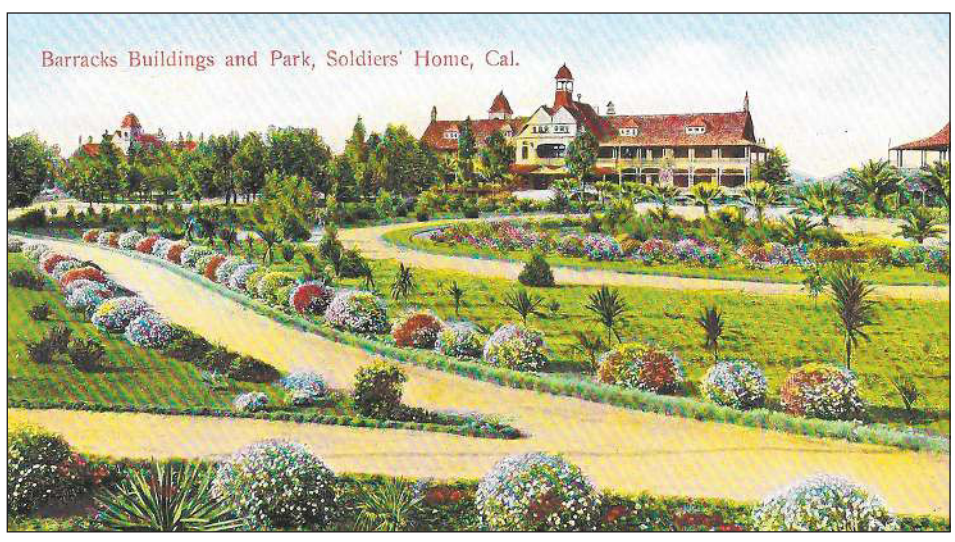
In 1930, the system of soldiers' homes began to wind down. More space and care were devoted to mental health. Treatment and research facilities began to shoulder the residences aside. Housing space was now just for patients, not simply down-and-out veterans.

What a paradox: This city, and the feds, are now trying with might and main to find housing for its veterans — in effect to re-create a barracks that thousands of veterans had called home.

A federal judge, David O. Carter — a former Vietnam combat Marine, recipient of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart — has decreed that the VA broke faith with the place's mission and undertook rich but illegal leases of the land to non-veteran interests — a baseball stadium for UCLA, a sports complex for a private school. And he ordered the VA to build about 2,500 housing units. Water must flow back uphill.

President McKinley visited Los Angeles and the Soldiers' Home in May of 1901. If their faces were not familiar to him, their stories were, for McKinley had served in the Union Army.

As he wound up his speech to the mustered lines of men, he said something that bears repeating now, when we are testing its truth: "The government for which you fought ... that government will see to it that in your declining years you shall not suffer but shall be surrounded with all the comforts and all the blessings which a grateful nation can provide."



BARRACKS at the Sawtelle Soldiers' Home are shown on a vintage postcard. As many as 3,000 soldiers at a time lived at the site, where drinking wasn't allowed.

Postcards from the collection of Patt Morrison

THIS POSTCARD bears a 1907 postmark and shows an aerial view of the Soldiers' Home. President McKinley, an Army man himself, visited a few years earlier and assured the veterans they would be taken care of.

Obituaries

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Carlos Antonio Rodriguez

A visionary financial leader and beloved husband, father, son and brother passed away peacefully on December 16th at the age of 51. He fought a courageous battle, demonstrating unwavering grace and resilience throughout his journey.

Carlos joins his treasured daughter Miranda Lucille leaving behind his loving wife Gina Galasso and adoring son Giancarlo Nicolas. Carlos will be missed by countless family and friends who loved him dearly and deeply. His legacy of tenacity and strength is lovingly etched in the hearts of all that he leaves behind.

Carlos's professional journey began at Price Waterhouse in Los Angeles after graduating from USC. With his exceptional business savvy, communication and leadership skills, he advanced to attain his professional aspiration to become a Chief Financial Officer. Under his guidance, the companies he served witnessed unprecedented transformation and financial growth, solidifying his position as an industry leader.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Carlos' primary love was his family and his desire to be the very best father and husband. He was passionate about supporting his son Giancarlo's endeavors and providing opportunities for youth to play soccer. An athlete in his own right, Carlos deeply understood the transformational power of sport. Carlos was an avid sports fan religiously supportive of his favorite teams. Carlos was a proud member of the Loyola High School Chain Gang, exemplifying his unwavering exuberance and zest for adventure.

Carlos embodied goodness. His unwavering determination, sharp wit, infectious laugh, and rich hugs will forever be cherished. Carlos served as a mentor, coach, and an adjunct professor reveling in the success and advancement of others.

If you would like to show your support, in lieu of flowers, Gina & Giancarlo ask that Carlos be remembered through the works of the USC Latino Alumni Association (LAA) Scholarship Fund or The Play Equity Fund.

Carlos will be remembered with love and fondness at his services:

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Computer dispatch system crashes

[**Dispatch,** from B1] entirely surprising.

"We're definitely behind on some technology," one official said. "It is an antiquated system and we have recognized that for some time."

Ex-Sheriff Alex Villanueva also weighed in on the matter Wednesday by posting a 2022 letter to the L.A. County Board of Supervisors on X.

In the letter, department leaders requested funding for a new computer-aided dispatch system, saying the existing system was so old it couldn't comply with data collection requirements.

For its part, the department said it was in the process of trying to upgrade the dispatch system.

"The Department has long faced significant challenges with outdated technology, and since taking office, the Sheriff has emphasized the urgent need to improve and upgrade our internal systems," read a department statement. "In mid-2023, the Department issued a formal request for proposals to acquire a new modernized, centralized CAD system that will greatly enhance our capabilities."

The Assn. for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, the union representing rank-and-file deputies, framed the New Year's Eve system crash in dire terms, pointing to it as evidence of a need for more funding.

"The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is under-resourced in critical areas of staffing, training, equipment, facilities and obviously technology," Richard Pippin, ALADS president, told The Times.

"Will the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors take notice in light of their own public demands for organizational improvements in advance of the upcoming Olympics and other major events? Violent street takeovers and sprawling homeless encampments might only be the start of our problems," Pippin added.

Homes for quadriplegics struggle after Prop. 35

[**Quadriplegics,** from B1]

ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

LUIS CERVANTES, right, adjusts his wheelchair into a prone position as others look on at the Laramie House. The congregate living facility's existence has been threatened in the wake of Proposition 35's passage.

"We haven't had a raise in 40 years," said Sian Welch, chief executive and administrator of New Start CLHF's Independent Training Centers, which operates three facilities including Laramie House.

If that continues, she said, "we'll have to close our doors."

California had been planning to raise reimbursement rates for facilities like Laramie House starting in January, but they were on the losing end after voters approved Proposition 35 in November.

The ballot measure aimed to secure funding for Medi-Cal, the California Medicaid program, by making an existing tax on managed care organizations permanent.

It was backed by a muscular coalition of healthcare groups including the California Hospital Assn. and Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California. The ballot measure also outlined a spending plan for the money, including increased payments for many healthcare providers who see Medi-Cal patients.

Doing so, proponents said, would help patients by easing shortages of healthcare providers who accept Medi-Cal. But because state lawmakers had already made budget plans for that tax revenue, passing Proposition 35 unraveled other plans for the tax money that weren't listed under the ballot measure.

State Sen. Caroline Menjivar (D-Panorama City) said she warned colleagues that worthwhile investments would be nullified if it passed. For many people with complex needs, she said, facilities like Laramie House "are the last line of defense."

More than 250 such facilities are licensed across California, over half of them in Los Angeles County, according to the most recent available state data. Mariam Voskanyan, president of the Congregate Living Health Facility Assn., said fewer may now be operating, based on her efforts to reach them.

Such facilities haven't received an increase in their Medi-Cal reimbursement rate since they originated in the 1980s, according to the Congregate Living Health Facility Assn., an industry group. The Department of Health Care Services said that based on available documentation, reimbursement rates for the facilities had not changed since at least 2012.

Daily rates for these homes range from under $92 to roughly $490 depending on the level of care required, compared with $292 to $610 daily for skilled nursing facilities, according to a September brief from the Department of Health Care Services.

Yet such homes are supposed to provide a level of medical care even more intense than that in nursing facilities. Before Proposition 35 passed, lawmakers agreed to a rate increase starting in 2025 to bring them closer in line with nursing homes, boosting most rates by roughly 60%. The total cost was $16 million annually, half of it from federal funds, according to the Department of Health Care Services.

Proposition 35 backers say state lawmakers could still choose to increase funding for the facilities by allocating money from the state general fund, where some of the tax revenue is going. Representatives of the homes were frustrated, however, at having to start over lobbying for the money.

And as President-elect Donald Trump heads toward his second term, health experts anticipate the federal government could make significant cuts to Medicaid, leaving programs competing for fewer Medi-Cal dollars.

"We are going to have an environment that potentially puts the Medicaid program at great risk overall," said Mayra Alvarez, president of the Children's Partnership, one of the groups that opposed Proposition 35.

Congregate living health facilities were born out of the efforts of Mary Williams, a Northridge nurse who was frustrated with the choices available for her quadriplegic patients when they were ready to leave the hospital.

Williams started opening residential facilities in the San Fernando Valley to care for patients in the 1980s, at times tangling with Medi-Cal officials who raised concerns about regulatory requirements. When government workers stepped in at one point to remove residents from the homes, one parked his wheelchair in a Northridge driveway in protest, telling The Times, "I feel safe here. And I'm not moving."

Regulations to govern the homes had not yet been drafted in Sacramento, The Times reported at the time, although Welch said Mary Williams — her mother — had been working with Medi-Cal from the beginning.

Today, "we are licensed by the California Department of Public Health, but they look like residential homes and they feel like residential homes," said Irene Tokar, a Congregate Living Health Facility Assn. board member. Residents "can go to church, they can go to the movies, they can go to lunch, be visited by family."

Cervantes said less than a week after moving into Laramie House, he had joined a housemate on a bus ride to the mall. "The fact that I know that I have the freedom to go out if I want — that changes my mood a lot."

Tyler Smith, 42, spent weeks in a coma after getting West Nile virus. He is now a quadriplegic and relies on a ventilator. Being in the hospital was "a special kind of hell" where his twin boys couldn't visit him, he said.

At Laramie House, his days include physical therapy, visits from family and friends, and meetings with his Bible study group. Technology helps him dictate text and continue working as a consultant. He can now breathe on his own for up to six hours, and his goal is to stay at Laramie House "until I can get as well as I'm going to get."

"It would be awful if suddenly this place had to shut down," he said.

Welch said she has gone into debt as costs for nurses have skyrocketed. The homes have to meet state requirements for staffing, including a nurse and a certified nurse assistant; Welch said she also pays for a restorative nurse assistant to help residents regain the ability to move and stand.

If "you have to just cut everything," Welch said, "it won't be what it's supposed to be."

If state rates do not increase, more homes will close and residents will be displaced, Voskanyan said. Most are freestanding, she added, "and don't have other lines of income to keep us afloat."

Her association spent $130,000 on lobbying during the last California legislative session on a handful of bills, including one from Menjivar that would have required a study on the costs of running such facilities.

The homes have also been tangled in another state problem: Residents like Cervantes can access congregate facilities through a waiver that allows Californians to get Medicaid benefits for in-home care, but demand has outstripped spots, resulting in a lengthy wait list.

For instance, Welch said a health plan turned down Angel Bustos when he first sought to move in, which forced him to wait more than a year for the waiver instead. Bustos, who was paralyzed for nearly a year after surviving gunshots, said he had suffered indignities at nursing homes, including a grisly bedsore on his back.

"I felt like I was cattle."

At Laramie House, the 37-year-old celebrated his wedding in its backyard. He made a trip in his wheelchair to the Starbucks down the street. He stood up for the first time in years.

"You feel like you're getting ready to go home," Bustos said. "Or you feel like you're at a home — which you are."

Times staff writer Melody Petersen and researcher Scott Wilson contributed to this report.

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General Announcements

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Parkwest Bicycle Casino Chip Redemption Program Effective December 2, 2024

Parkwest Bicycle Casino is removing all previously issued gaming chips from circulation. All chips may be redeemed during business hours at any casino cage from December 2, 2024 to January 31, 2025. Parkwest Bicycle Casino will not honor or redeem any previously issued chips starting February 1, 2025.
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Legal Notices

SUMMONS
CASE NO. 2024-JV-56
IN THE JUVENILE COURT
OF HOUSTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

IN THE MATTER OF:
BREEA DIONA MOORE, DOB: 09/02/2007
BREJAYA ANTIONETTE MOORE, DOB: 10/25/2008
CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

DEFENDANT(S):
Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore

PLAINTIFF(S):
Tennessee Department of Children's Services

ORDER FOR SERVICE BY PUBLICATION
It appearing to the Court from the allegations of the Petition to Adjudicate Dependency and Neglect, to Transfer Temporary Legal Custody, the Motion for Service by Publication and the Affidavit of Diligent Search that the whereabouts of Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore are unknown and cannot be ascertained by diligent search; therefore, the ordinary process of law cannot be served upon Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore.

It is, therefore, ORDERED that Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore be served by publication of the following notice for four consecutive weeks in the Los Angeles Times, a newspaper published in Los Angeles, California.

It is further ORDERED that if Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore does not enter an appearance or otherwise Answer the Petition, further personal service or service by further publication shall be dispensed with and service of any future notices, motions, orders or other legal documents in this matter may be made upon Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore by filing same with the Juvenile Court Clerk of Houston County, Tennessee.

NOTICE! The State of Tennessee, Department of Children's Services, has filed a petition against Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore seeking to adjudicate dependency and neglect. It appears that ordinary process of law cannot be served upon Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore because their whereabouts are unknown. Sparkle Davis and Larry Moore are hereby ORDERED TO APPEAR IN THE HOUSTON COUNTY JUVENILE COURT IN ERIN, TENNESSEE ON **FEBRUARY 11, 2025, AT 1:00 P.M.**, to defend the allegations or a default judgement shall be taken against you. You may view and obtain a copy of the Petition and any other subsequently filed legal documents at the Houston County Juvenile Court Clerk's Office in Erin, Tennessee.

Entered this 17th day of December, 2024.

Markley P. Runyon, **JUDGE**

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah M. Davis (039938)
Associate General Counsel
State of Tennessee, DCS
213 Beasley Drive
Dickson, TN 37055
Hannah.davis@tn.gov

Published in the Los Angeles Times

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Legal Notices

SOUTH COAST
AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
NOTICE OF HYBRID GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a meeting of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) Board will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, January 10, 2025 through a hybrid format of in-person attendance in the Dr. William A. Burke Auditorium at the South Coast AQMD Headquarters, 21865 Copley Drive, Diamond Bar, California and/or virtual attendance via videoconferencing and by telephone. Instructions on how to join the meeting remotely are shown below. Please refer to South Coast AQMD's website at http://www.aqmd.gov/home/news-events/meeting-agendas-minutes for information regarding the format of the meeting, updates, and details on how to participate.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION
Join Zoom Meeting - from PC, Laptop or Phone
https://scaqmd.zoom.us/j/93128605044
Meeting ID: 931.2860.5044
Teleconference Dial In +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782
Spanish Language Only Audience (telephone)
Número Telefónico para la Audiencia que Habla Español
Teleconference Dial In/Numero para llamar: +1 669 900 6833
Meeting ID/Identificación de la reunión: 932 0955 9643
One tap mobile: +16699006833, 93209559643#
Audience will be allowed to provide public comment in person
and through Zoom connection or telephone.
PUBLIC COMMENT WILL STILL BE TAKEN
DATED: December 31, 2024
FAYE THOMAS
Clerk of the Boards

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
for the
Northern District of California
SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION
Civil Action No. 5:24-cv-06501-PCP

Plaintiff(s)
AARON ROBINSON
v.
Defendant(s)
ALEX BINELLO

To: (Defendant's name and address)
ALEX BINELLO
1075 Park Pl., Apt. 203
San Mateo, CA 94403-7109

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) – or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) – you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are:
RYAN E. HATCH
HATCH LAW, PC
13323 Washington Blvd., Ste 302
Los Angeles, CA 90066

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

Date: September 17, 2024
Mark B. Busby, Clerk of the Court
Kim Means, Deputy Clerk

Published in the Los Angeles Times 12/27/2024, 1/3/2025, 1/10/2025 and 1/17/2025.

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NEYNP
ZDADE
TARROO
MOCIEN

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Sir, you need to check these bags.
I can get these to fit. I've done this tons of times. If you wouldn't charge so much, I'd have checked these.
Give us a break.
1/3
WHEN HIS LUGGAGE DIDN'T FIT INTO THE OVERHEAD BIN, THE PASSENGER ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: DEPTH BYLAW USEFUL FREELY
Answer: When it comes to giving lawns morning moisture, Mother Nature tries to — "DEW" HER BEST

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THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

A seasonable afternoon: Temperatures will rise to near average Friday as an upper-level high gradually shifts eastward. A dissipating front will slide down from the north Friday night, bringing gusty winds to some areas, but rain will remain well to the north. An offshore flow will develop next week, allowing for the potential for strong Santa Ana winds.

5-day forecasts

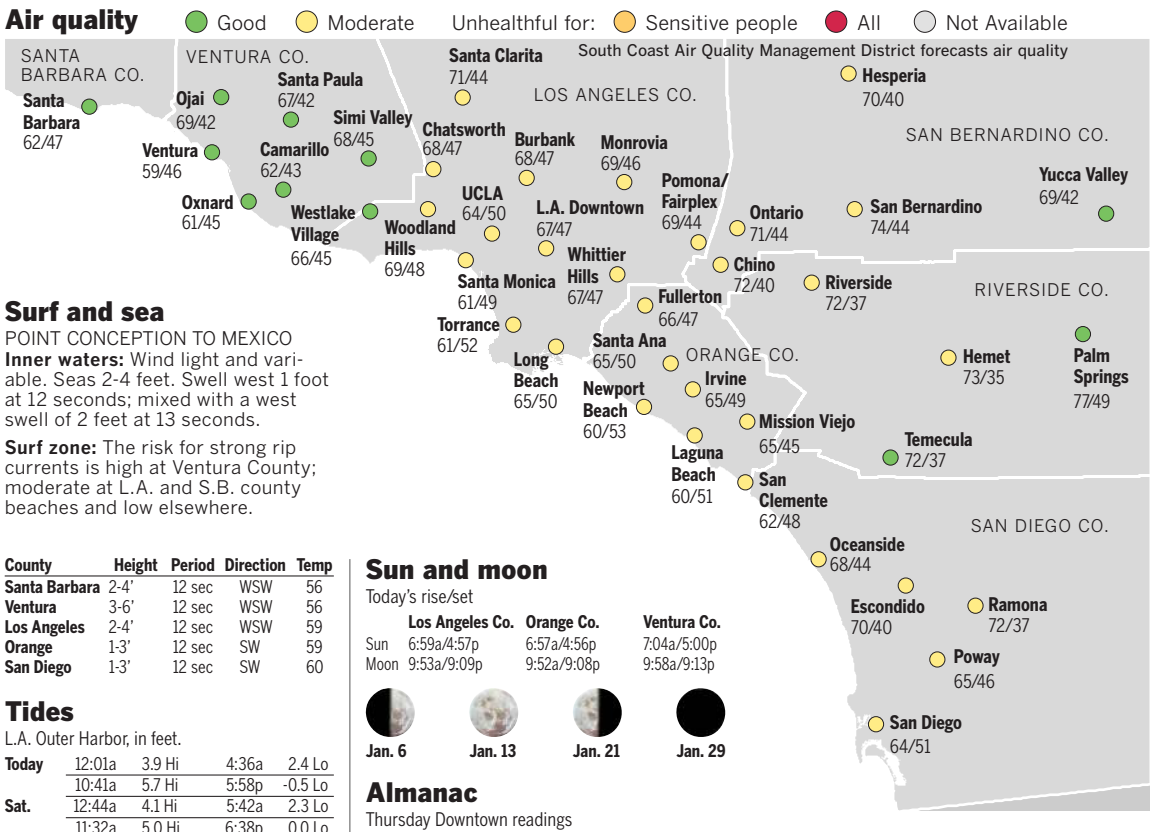
High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

	L.A. Basin		Valleys		Beaches		Mountains		Deserts	
Today	67|47		67|49		61|49		58|30		77|49	
	Not as warm		Cooler		Clouds and sun; cool		Clouds and sunshine		Partly sunny	
Saturday	Partly sunny	63/50	Partly sunny	66/50	Mostly cloudy	61/49	Cooler	47/17	Some sun	74/50
Sunday	Partly sunny	72/49	Partly sunny	72/50	Partly sunny	67/48	Not as cool	55/24	Some sun	77/50
Monday	Mostly sunny	71/50	Mostly sunny	72/49	Mostly sunny	67/49	Mostly sunny	55/19	Mostly sunny	78/54
Tuesday	Partly sunny	73/52	Windy	70/52	Partly sunny	71/51	A p.m. shower	51/27	Partly sunny	73/55

Air quality

Good · Moderate · Unhealthful for: Sensitive people · All · Not Available

South Coast Air Quality Management District forecasts air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO

Inner waters: Wind light and variable. Seas 2-4 feet. Swell west 1 foot at 12 seconds; mixed with a west swell of 2 feet at 13 seconds.

Surf zone: The risk for strong rip currents is high at Ventura County; moderate at L.A. and S.B. county beaches and low elsewhere.

County	Height	Period	Direction	Temp
Santa Barbara	2-4'	12 sec	WSW	56
Ventura	3-6'	12 sec	WSW	56
Los Angeles	2-4'	12 sec	WSW	59
Orange	1-3'	12 sec	SW	59
San Diego	1-3'	12 sec	SW	60

Tides

L.A. Outer Harbor, in feet.

Today	12:01a	3.9 Hi	4:36a	2.4 Lo
	10:41a	5.7 Hi	5:58p	-0.5 Lo
Sat.	12:44a	4.1 Hi	5:42a	2.3 Lo
	11:32a	5.0 Hi	6:38p	0.0 Lo

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people

Las Vegas, 60 · Phoenix, 45
Los Angeles, 60 · San Francisco, 60

Sun and moon

Today's rise/set

	Los Angeles Co.	Orange Co.	Ventura Co.
Sun	6:59a/4:57p	6:57a/4:56p	7:04a/5:00p
Moon	9:53a/9:09p	9:52a/9:08p	9:58a/9:13p

Jan. 6 · Jan. 13 · Jan. 21 · Jan. 29

Almanac

Thursday Downtown readings

Temperature	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
High/low	78/47	71/42	76/47
Normal high/low	68/48	68/46	66/44
High/low a year ago	68/45	67/44	66/51
Record high/date	85/1994	84/2012	82/1996
Record low/date	32/1886	37/2019	32/1954

Precipitation	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
24-hour total (as of 2 p.m.)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Season total (since Oct. 1)	0.16	0.03	0.44
Last season (Oct. 1 to date)	3.18	1.93	5.43
Season norm (Oct. 1 to date)	4.07	3.29	4.73
Humidity (high/low)	92/30	65/23	86/25

California cities*

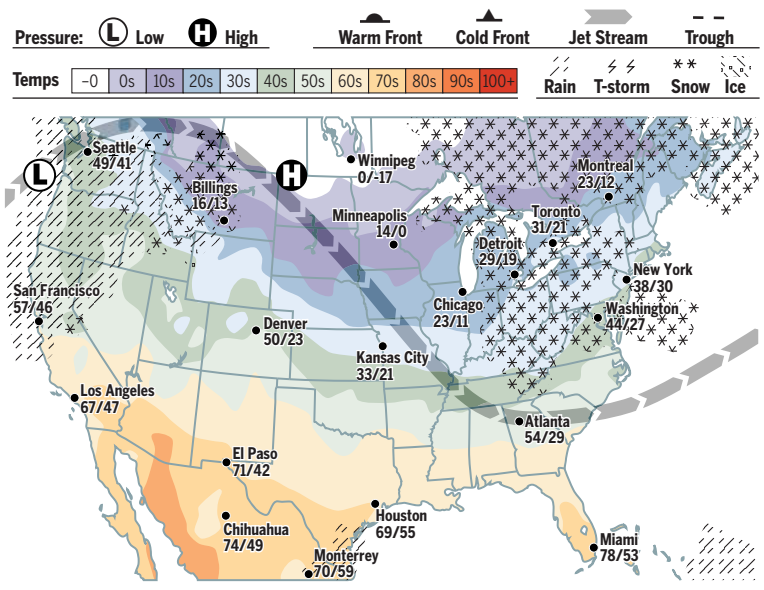
City	Thu.* Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Today Hi	Lo	Sat. Hi	Lo
Anaheim	73	47	--	66	47	66	47
Avalon/Catalina	73	55	--	61	48	56	51
Bakersfield	62	44	--	67	45	56	40
Barstow	66	38	--	67	45	61	38
Big Bear Lake	61	26	--	58	30	47	17
Bishop	63	27	--	62	26	56	25
Burbank	79	47	--	68	47	65	46
Camarillo	71	44	--	62	43	64	44
Chatsworth	76	49	--	68	47	66	50
Chino	85	42	--	72	40	68	38
Compton	71	50	--	66	50	66	47
Dana Point	63	52	--	60	51	60	47
Death Valley	70	45	--	70	51	70	49
Del Mar	66	49	.01	61	51	60	47
Escondido	80	42	--	70	40	65	37
Eureka	62	51	.08	54	45	55	48
Fallbrook	80	45	--	69	40	65	39
Fresno	60	45	--	65	43	57	41
Fullerton	71	47	--	66	47	65	45
Hemet	82	41	--	73	35	64	35
Hesperia	65	40	--	68	39	56	30
Huntington Beach	59	49	.01	60	52	63	49
Idyllwild	70	46	--	61	41	54	36
Irvine	74	47	.01	65	49	66	45

City	Thu.* Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Today Hi	Lo	Sat. Hi	Lo
L.A. D'ntown/USC	77	51	--	67	47	63	50
L.A. Int'l. Airport	71	50	--	61	50	61	48
Laguna Beach	61	51	Tr	60	51	61	48
Lancaster	64	32	--	67	43	61	27
Long Beach	71	50	--	65	50	65	50
Mammoth Lakes	54	28	--	46	14	40	21
Mission Viejo	75	51	--	65	45	62	45
Monrovia	76	55	--	69	46	65	51
Monterey	68	47	--	59	43	57	42
Mt. Wilson	65	48	--	50	42	47	40
Needles	71	44	--	69	44	70	48
Newport Beach	58	50	.01	60	53	62	49
Northridge	81	47	--	69	47	67	51
Oakland	62	48	--	59	43	59	43
Oceanside	80	38	--	68	44	65	36
Ojai	80	50	--	69	42	65	43
Ontario	84	50	--	71	44	65	44
Palm Springs	76	51	--	77	49	74	50
Pasadena	81	53	--	67	48	64	50
Paso Robles	69	39	--	64	39	60	36
Redding	59	50	.01	55	43	53	41
Riverside	81	41	--	72	37	64	38
Sacramento	60	45	--	56	39	55	42
San Bernardino	84	45	--	74	44	67	42

City	Thu.* Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Today Hi	Lo	Sat. Hi	Lo
San Diego	69	47	--	64	51	64	45
San Francisco	59	52	--	57	46	60	45
San Gabriel	79	52	--	69	47	66	50
San Jose	66	50	--	61	43	59	43
San Luis Obispo	77	45	--	64	45	65	48
Santa Ana	70	50	--	65	50	64	49
Santa Barbara	72	45	--	62	47	65	41
Santa Clarita	76	46	--	71	44	67	46
Santa Monica Pier	65	47	--	61	49	61	49
Santa Paula	78	49	--	67	42	65	45
Santa Rosa	64	48	--	59	37	60	39
Simi Valley	77	48	--	68	45	66	45
Tahoe Valley	49	34	--	43	14	41	18
Temecula	79	45	--	72	37	65	40
Thousand Oaks	77	48	--	65	45	68	49
Torrance	72	52	--	61	52	61	50
UCLA	73	49	--	64	50	65	48
Van Nuys	80	48	--	70	47	68	49
Ventura	72	48	--	59	46	60	47
Whittier Hills	73	49	--	67	47	65	49
Woodland Hills	77	49	--	69	48	69	49
Wrightwood	59	44	--	59	41	47	30
Yorba Linda	74	46	--	67	43	65	41
Yosemite Valley	54	40	--	53	23	51	34

Today in North America

Snow squalls: Cold air will continue to filter into the East on Friday, with gusty winds in many areas. Snow squalls could mean reduced visibility in many areas, even as far south as Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. It will be stormy in the Northwest, with snow, ice and rain.



U.S. cities

THURSDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES

High 86 in Murrieta, Calif. **Low** –14 in Boulder, Wyo.

City	Thursday* Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Today Hi	Lo	Sky
Albany	38	34	.10	34	21	Sf
Albuquerque	61	28	--	59	35	Su
Anchorage	8	2	--	10	3	Su
Aspen	35	18	.10	43	25	Pc
Atlanta	51	31	--	54	29	Su
Austin	63	35	--	65	55	Pc
Baltimore	41	34	--	42	26	Sn
Boise	42	27	.09	52	35	R
Boston	43	37	Tr	38	27	Su
Buffalo	33	30	.04	30	21	Sf
Burlington, Vt.	35	32	Tr	31	16	Pc
Charleston, S.C.	55	34	--	59	32	Su
Charlotte	48	30	--	52	26	Su
Chicago	31	24	Tr	23	11	Su
Cincinnati	40	29	--	34	16	Sf
Cleveland	30	27	.04	30	21	Sf
Columbia, S.C.	51	29	--	57	27	Su
Columbus	33	29	Tr	33	19	Sn
Dallas/Ft.Worth	60	35	--	61	49	Pc
Denver	50	18	Tr	50	23	Cy
Detroit	29	28	.01	29	19	Sf
El Paso	69	35	--	71	42	Su
Eugene	49	46	.80	54	46	R
Fort Myers	73	50	--	73	49	Su
Hartford	45	38	Tr	39	25	Su
Honolulu	84	72	.02	83	66	Su
Houston	61	46	.03	69	55	Pc
Indianapolis	39	24	Tr	27	15	Sf
Jacksonville, Fla.	62	37	--	64	36	Su
Kansas City	44	29	--	33	21	Su
Knoxville	42	28	--	44	22	Sf
Las Vegas	63	42	--	62	47	Pc
Louisville	44	30	--	38	21	Sf
Medford	50	42	.08	52	41	R
Memphis	51	29	--	49	30	Su
Miami	78	64	--	78	53	Pc
Milwaukee	31	22	Tr	26	12	Su
Minneapolis	21	14	Tr	14	0	Su
Nashville	47	25	--	43	25	Su
New Orleans	63	49	--	65	53	Pc
New York	42	37	--	38	30	Pc
Norfolk	46	38	--	50	30	Cy
Oklahoma City	56	28	--	52	38	Su
Omaha	30	26	.05	24	15	Pc
Orlando	66	48	--	69	46	Su
Philadelphia	43	35	--	41	28	Sn
Phoenix	76	48	--	78	49	Pc
Pittsburgh	31	28	.02	31	19	Sn
Portland, Ore.	43	41	.57	51	46	R
Providence	43	35	.01	38	25	Su
Raleigh/Durham	48	32	--	52	26	Pc
Reno	59	38	--	53	28	Sh
Richmond	45	32	--	48	25	Pc
St. Louis	46	28	.02	37	22	Su
Salt Lake City	52	38	.03	54	35	Pc

City	Thursday* Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Today Hi	Lo	Sky
Seattle	47	38	.06	49	41	R
Tampa	70	51	--	68	48	Su
Tucson	77	41	--	84	47	Cy
Tulsa	53	26	--	48	33	Pc
Washington, D.C.	45	38	--	44	27	Sf
Wichita	48	25	--	43	28	Pc

World

City	Thursday* Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Today Hi	Lo	Sky
Acapulco	87	71	--	87	70	Pc
Amsterdam	41	37	.80	41	33	Pc
Athens	61	45	--	60	45	Su
Bangkok	90	70	--	90	70	Su
Barcelona	59	39	--	57	44	Cy
Berlin	41	36	.28	37	29	Sn
Cabo San Lucas	82	54	--	83	58	Su
Cairo	68	50	--	69	52	Su
Dubai	73	70	--	73	57	Su
Dublin	37	28	--	37	30	Su
Havana	81	65	--	80	61	Pc
Ho Chi Minh City	88	77	.04	90	72	R
Hong Kong	71	61	--	71	58	Hz
Istanbul	54	37	--	58	51	Su
Jerusalem	55	38	--	58	39	Su
Johannesburg	79	61	.15	78	61	Ts
Kuala Lumpur	94	75	.25	87	74	Ts
Lima	76	66	--	76	67	Pc
London	39	36	--	40	29	Su
Madrid	52	28	.01	48	33	Cy
Mecca	88	55	--	87	63	Su
Mexico City	70	44	--	69	47	Pc
Montreal	30	29	.20	23	12	Sn
Moscow	37	32	.18	27	21	Cy
Mumbai	91	75	--	92	70	Hz
New Delhi	60	47	--	66	45	Hz
Paris	41	38	.91	39	26	Hz
Prague	37	36	.13	35	26	Pc
Rome	57	39	.02	59	42	R
Seoul	41	20	--	36	13	Su
Singapore	88	79	.06	89	77	Ts
Taipei City	70	59	.12	63	58	Cy
Tokyo	54	41	.03	45	38	R
Vancouver	41	34	.22	43	41	R
Vienna	40	27	.04	40	30	W

Key: **Su** sunny; **Pc** partly cloudy; **Cy** cloudy; **Fg** foggy; **Prcp** precipitation; **Dr** drizzle; **Hz** hazy **Sh** showers; **Ts** thunderstorms; **R** rain; **Sn** snow; **Sf** snow flurries; **I** ice; **Rs** rain/snow; **W** windy; **Tr** trace. **Notes:** National extremes exclude Alaska and Hawaii. * - data estimated. Thursday's readings as of 2 p.m.

Forecasts by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2025
AccuWeather Visit AccuWeather.com

UCLA REPORT

Road games will be loud and rowdy for the Bruins

By Ben Bolch

Rebecca S. Gratz Associated Press

NEBRASKA fans cheer the team. With a victory over UCLA, the Cornhuskers would tie the school record of 20 straight home wins.

When **Tyler Bilodeau, Kobe Johnson** and the other UCLA starters approach center court for tipoff against Nebraska on Saturday inside Pinnacle Bank Arena, the roars from a sold-out crowd washing over them, one thing will be thunderously clear.

They're not in Gill Coliseum, Maples Pavilion or any of the other sleepy Pac-12 arenas anymore.

Noise will be a constant companion as UCLA navigates its first Big Ten schedule. Nine conference teams are averaging at least 10,000 fans for home games, with Indiana's average of 16,514 leading the way. Purdue ranks second with 14,876 fans per home game, followed closely by Nebraska (14,848), Michigan State (14,797) and Illinois (14,789).

"I don't think I can name a single Big Ten stadium where their fans don't come and, like, show out and support and they're talking trash," said UCLA junior guard **Skyy Clark**, a veteran of the experience after having spent his freshman season at Illinois. "It definitely gets loud and rowdy, so it's a fun environment to play in."

Well, maybe not always for the visitors.

Nebraska (11-2 overall, 1-1 Big Ten) has won 19 consecutive games on its home court during a streak that began in December 2023. With a victory over the No. 15 Bruins (11-2, 2-0), the Cornhuskers would tie the school record of 20 straight home wins they set twice previously.

UCLA coach **Mick Cronin** understands the challenge that awaits after having taken Cincinnati to Pinnacle Bank Arena in December 2014, when his Bearcats lost in double overtime.

At the time, Cronin called the 15,147-seat facility "probably, outside of Louisville, the best arena I've ever been in."

The atmosphere Saturday will certainly be more raucous than what the Bruins experienced in the Pac-12, where some libraries might have been louder than the basketball arenas.

Often it seemed as if the wrestling and basketball banners hanging from the rafters inside Oregon State's Gill Coliseum outnumbered the fans.

Washington State players once made a habit of venturing into the stands to personally thank fans who showed up inside Beasley Coliseum, the goodwill gesture needing only a few minutes to complete.

At Maples Pavilion, UCLA blue often eclipsed Stanford red.

"There's some schools — obviously we're not in their league anymore — you go play in those places and there's 1,000 people and it's cold and you're paranoid because your guys can't get going, there's just no energy in the building," Cronin said this week.

Arizona was the only Pac-12 team to average at least 10,000 fans for home games during the conference's final season. Oregon State, Stanford and Washington State averaged fewer than 4,000 fans, with California barely topping that threshold at 4,022.

There will be a carryover effect in the Big Ten given that all four newcomers from the Pac-12 rank in the bottom five in home attendance, with USC's average of 3,872 the lowest and UCLA ranking next to last with an average of 4,830.

The Bruins can expect more than double those figures almost every time they board a plane for the Midwest or the East Coast.

"In those college towns," Cronin said, "it's the only show in town, so they get great attendance. ... So the energy won't be a problem in the building in those places. You better play with toughness, you better travel your defense because teams with home crowds like that tend to play harder and I think it's fool's gold to think you're going to go into those type of places and score 80 points."

The Bruins might also want to pack their winter coats. The forecast for Lincoln, Neb., on Saturday calls for a high of 24 degrees, giving Cronin a chance to use the ski mask and gloves his brother, **Dan,** bought him for Christmas.

"I was like, 'Yo, man, I live in Southern California,' " Mick Cronin said, "and he's like, 'You're in the Big Ten.' How about that? The guy's a comedian."

Injury updates

Cronin said forward **William Kyle III** was probably out for the game against Nebraska but could return as soon as Tuesday against Michigan after undergoing surgery for an undisclosed condition.

Forward **Eric Dailey Jr.** is expected to wear a mask "for the foreseeable future" after absorbing a shot to the face against North Carolina last month, Cronin said.

In his first game wearing the mask, against Gonzaga, Dailey made four of five three-pointers. "He may not take it off the rest of the year," Cronin cracked.

Etc.

Former UCLA forward **Berke Buyuktuncel** is averaging 7.9 points and a team-leading 6.6 rebounds in his first season at Nebraska. "I'm happy for him," Cronin said. "He's definitely gotten stronger and I think he fits into what they do." Bruins forward **Lazar Stefanovic** said he looked forward to reuniting with his former roommate. "The thing I loved about him was when we would play video games, he would make, like, all the jokes and stuff and everybody in the apartment would have a lot of fun with it," Stefanovic said. "And he was good at video games." ... UCLA made 42.9% of its three-pointers in December, raising its accuracy from long range for the season to 37.1%. "The advantage we have in our starting lineup," Cronin said, "is everybody can shoot."

Lanning takes blame for Rose Bowl loss

'I didn't get our team prepared,' Oregon coach says after 41-21 rout by Ohio State.

By Anthony De Leon

Wally Skalij Los Angeles Times

OREGON QUARTERBACK Dillon Gabriel is brought down by Ohio State defenders Kenyatta Jackson Jr., left, and Lathan Ransom. The top-ranked Ducks came up short of winning their first football championship.

In an instant, Oregon's dream of a perfect season vanished.

Throughout the lead-up to the Rose Bowl, Oregon coach Dan Lanning emphasized preparation at every opportunity. Yet, in the heavyweight rematch, his team took the punch to the mouth and never recovered, suffering a lopsided 41-21 loss.

"They clicked tonight, and we didn't," Lanning said. "I didn't get our team prepared."

"Clicking" on offense may be an understatement. The Buckeyes looked unstoppable.

Ohio State's high-powered offense scored quickly and often, racking up 34 points by halftime. Oregon, on the other hand, struggled to sustain drives, scoring once before the half and failing to get much going against Ohio State's stifling defense.

It was a showcase of the Buckeyes' talent. The Ducks' talent helped them earn the No. 1 seed as the only undefeated team in the country, including an October victory over Ohio State. But in the biggest game of their season, "we didn't have the ability to stop them," Lanning said.

The Ducks' difficulty performing at the level they had all season was frustrating for Lanning and his team.

Could it have been the nearly monthlong break between the Big Ten Championship and the Rose Bowl? Lanning dismissed that as an excuse, saying, "I thought our guys prepared well going in. Obviously, they had a better plan than us."

Did Ohio State's Ryan Day outcoach Lanning, who was hailed as a master strategist after his team edged the Buckeyes 32-31 in October?

"Coach Day and his staff have done an unbelievable job," Lanning said. "We have to find ways to prepare ourselves for these moments better as a coaching staff."

Or perhaps Ohio State was simply that much better and proved it.

"When you play a great team like Ohio State, you can't not be clicking on all cylinders," Lanning said.

Lanning said his team never gave up as it tried to mount a comeback.

"There wasn't a second we stepped on the field where I felt our guys were disheartened," he said.

This was especially true of quarterback Dillon Gabriel. Despite the seemingly insurmountable deficit and eight sacks, he popped right back up and searched for answers.

Just before halftime, Gabriel led the Ducks on a 75-yard scoring drive, capping it with a touchdown pass. He opened the second half with another 75-yard scoring drive. Ultimately, he was outdueled by Will Howard, who ended Gabriel's best chance at winning a national championship.

"Dillon did an unbelievable job there at the end of the half creating a spark for our team," Lanning said. "It was this guy busting his tail."

The clock ran out on the senior quarterback's college career — an unceremonious end to a journey that took him across the nation to Central Florida and Oklahoma before he became a Heisman Trophy finalist after steering Oregon to a Big Ten title in its first season in the conference.

The Ducks came up short of winning their first football championship, fumbling their best chance to overcome that hurdle since 2015, a season that also ended with a loss to Ohio State in the title game.

Will this loss serve as the fuel needed to drive them forward, building on the program's success to win that elusive title? For now, the wounds are too fresh for Lanning and his crew.

"We're probably not there yet," Lanning said. "There's disappointment. ... Adversity happens in life. And we're going to get an opportunity in life to continue to attack and move forward."

BOWL SCHEDULE

BOWL	WHEN (PST), TV
First Responder: North Texas vs. Texas State	Today, 1 p.m., ESPN
Duke's Mayo: Minnesota vs. Virginia Tech	Today, 4:30 p.m., ESPN
Bahamas: Buffalo vs. Liberty	Saturday, 8 a.m., ESPN/ESPN2
Orange: Penn State vs. Notre Dame (CFP semifinal)	Jan. 9, 4:30 p.m., ESPN
Cotton: Texas vs. Ohio State (CFP semifinal)	Jan. 10, 4:30 p.m., ESPN
CFP Championship: TBD	Jan. 20, 4:30 p.m., ESPN

Results

Celebration: Jackson State 28, South Carolina State 7 (Dec. 14)

Salute to Veterans: South Alabama 30, Western Michigan 23 (Dec. 14)

Frisco: Memphis 42, West Virginia 37 (Dec. 17)

Boca Raton: James Madison 27, Western Kentucky 17 (Dec. 18)

LA: Nevada Las Vegas 24, California 13 (Dec. 18)

New Orleans: Sam Houston State 31, Georgia Southern 26 (Dec. 19)

Cure: Ohio 30, Jacksonville State 27 (Dec. 20)

Gasparilla: Florida 33, Tulane 8 (Dec. 20)

CFP first round: Notre Dame 27, Indiana 17 (Dec. 20)

CFP first round: Penn State 38, Southern Methodist 10 (Dec. 21)

CFP first round: Texas 38, Clemson 24 (Dec. 21)

CFP first round: Ohio State 42, Tennessee 17 (Dec. 21)

Myrtle Beach: Texas San Antonio 44, Coastal Carolina 15 (Dec. 23)

Famous Idaho Potato: Northern Illinois 28, Fresno State 20 (2OT) (Dec. 23)

Hawaii: South Florida 41, San José State 39 (5OT) (Dec. 24)

GameAbove Sports: Toledo 48, Pittsburgh 46 (6OT) (Dec. 26)

Rate Bowl: Kansas State 44, Rutgers 41 (Dec. 26)

68 Ventures: Arkansas State 38, Bowling Green 31 (Dec. 26)

Armed Forces: Navy 21, Oklahoma 20 (Dec. 27)

Birmingham: Vanderbilt 35, Georgia Tech 27 (Dec. 27)

Liberty: Arkansas 39, Texas Tech 26 (Dec. 27)

Holiday: Syracuse 52, Washington State 35 (Dec. 27)

Las Vegas: USC 35, Texas A&M 31 (Dec. 27)

Fenway: Connecticut 27, North Carolina 14 (Dec. 28)

Pinstripe: Nebraska 20, Boston College 15 (Dec. 28)

New Mexico: Texas Christian 34, Louisiana 3 (Dec. 28)

Pop-Tarts: Iowa State 42, Miami 41 (Dec. 28)

Arizona: Miami (Ohio) 43, Colorado State 17 (Dec. 28)

Military: East Carolina 26, North Carolina State 21 (Dec. 28)

Alamo: Brigham Young 34, Colorado 14 (Dec. 28)

Independence: Army 27, Louisiana Tech 6 (Dec. 28)

Music City: Missouri 27, Iowa 24 (Dec. 30)

ReliaQuest: Michigan 19, Alabama 13 (Dec. 31)

Sun: Louisville 35, Washington 34 (Dec. 31)

Citrus: Illinois 21, South Carolina 17 (Dec. 31)

Texas: Louisiana State 44, Baylor 31 (Dec. 31)

Fiesta (CFP quarterfinal): Penn State 31, Boise State 14 (Dec. 31)

Peach (CFP quarterfinal): Texas 39, Arizona 31 (2 OT) (Jan. 1)

Rose (CFP quarterfinal): Ohio State 41, Oregon 21 (Jan. 1)

Sugar (CFP quarterfinal): Notre Dame 23, Georgia 10 (Jan. 2)

Gator: Duke vs. Mississippi, late (Jan. 2)

Buckeyes eliminate Ducks with rout

[**Rose Bowl,** from B10]
later, Buckeyes quarterback Will Howard stood tall in the pocket and threw a 42-yard dart just out of reach of Oregon's Brandon Johnson and into the hands of receiver Emeka Egbuka for Ohio State's second touchdown. Both early scoring drives spanned one minute.

Howard finished 17 for 26 for 319 yards and three touchdowns, building on his 311-yard, two-touchdown performance in the first-round win over Tennessee.

Smith said the receivers tell Howard during practice to "just throw it out there" and they'll make a play on the ball, regardless of whether it's considered a bad throw.

"Will does a great job in practice just trusting us, just throwing the ball out there," Smith said. "We gotta make our quarterback look good. But Will plays on that confidence that he has, just being a leader out there. I feed off his energy."

The Ohio State defense matched the offense's intensity, smothering Oregon's run game and holding the Ducks to minus-26 rushing yards, their fewest in 16 years. The Buckeyes (12-2) also made 13 tackles for a loss.

The pass rush that Dillon Gabriel was able to expertly elude during their first matchup hounded the Ducks quarterback with eight sacks.

The key blow came at the 11:13 mark of the second quarter. Oregon (13-1), facing fourth and three from its 48-yard line while trailing 17-0, went for it. The pocket collapsed around Gabriel, who tried to find Terrance Ferguson running across the field, only for his pass to be broken up by Ohio State linebacker Cody Simon.

Two plays later, Howard connected with Smith again, this time for a 43-yard bomb to extend the lead to 24-0.

Wally Skalij Los Angeles Times

LINEBACKER Cody Simon celebrates after sacking Oregon quarterback Dillon Gabriel at the Rose Bowl.

Simon, who had a game-high 11 tackles, including three for losses and two sacks, won defensive most valuable player.

"One of the biggest things we changed was just our attitude, our mentality," Simon said. "There was a lot of plays in the first game that we weren't even aligned. We weren't ready to go and with an offense like that in Oregon, they thrive on that stuff.

"We went through a lot of tough conversations after that game, but I think we're better for it now. We made those changes, and like Coach [Ryan] Day said, it's all about execution. No matter what ... you have to do your job."

Smith ended up with 187 yards and two touchdowns on seven receptions, setting a school record for receiving yards in a game by a freshman (previously set by Cris Carter in the 1985 Rose Bowl) and earning offensive MVP. It was Smith's fifth 100-yard game, making him the 12th receiver in program history and the first freshman to accomplish the feat.

With the game in hand, the Buckeyes got the run game going as the duo of TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins combined for 179 yards and two touchdowns.

Day and offensive coordinator Chip Kelly also got a boost. Day notched his third playoff victory and fifth win against a top-five team amid criticism he struggles to win big games. After Kelly was roasted for his play calling during a loss to rival Michigan, his Buckeyes were ready to overpower the Oregon defense.

" Chip called a great game," Day said. "The whole offensive staff worked hard to put the plan together, but ultimately it comes down to the players putting it on the field. ... I thought they really put it on the field and came out aggressive, but I thought Chip called an aggressive game and certainly had a big smile on his face after."

WEDNESDAY'S SUMMARY
OHIO ST. 41, OREGON 21

Ohio St.	14	20	7	0—41
Oregon	0	8	7	6—21

First Quarter

OSU—J.Smith 45 pass from Howard (Fielding kick), 14:00.
OSU—Egbuka 42 pass from Howard (Fielding kick), 7:31.

Second Quarter

OSU—FG Fielding 46, 14:50.
OSU—J.Smith 43 pass from Howard (Fielding kick), 10:28.
OSU—Henderson 66 run (Fielding kick), 8:47.
OSU—FG Fielding 36, 2:59.
ORE—Holden 5 pass from Gabriel (Lowe pass from Gabriel), :00.

Third Quarter

ORE—Whittington 2 run (Sappington kick), 8:55.
OSU—Henderson 8 run (Fielding kick), 2:19.

Fourth Quarter

ORE—Holden 27 pass from Gabriel (run failed), 10:00.
Attendance—90,732.

STATISTICS

TEAM	OSU	ORE
First downs	20	15
Total Net Yards	500	276
Rushes-yards	31-181	28-23
Passing	319	299
Punt Returns	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns	1-3	0-0
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	17-26-0	29-42-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	0-0	8-56
Punts	5-40.4	8-39.875
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties-Yards	2-14	3-13
Time of Possession	29:05	30:55

Individual Leaders

RUSHING: Ohio St., Henderson 8-94, Judkins 17-85, J.Smith 1-5, Howard 5-(minus 3). Oregon, J.James 7-14, Limar 2-4, Whittington 6-3, Te.Johnson 1-(minus 1), Gabriel 12-(minus 43).

PASSING: Ohio St., Howard 17-26-0-319. Oregon, Gabriel 29-41-0-299, D.Moore 0-1-0-0.

RECEIVING: Ohio St., J.Smith 7-187, Egbuka 5-72, Henderson 3-20, G.Scott 1-30, Tate 1-10. Oregon, Holden 7-116, Whittington 6-30, Te.Ferguson 5-71, Te.Johnson 5-32, Lowe 2-27, J.James 2-7, Sadiq 1-10, Bryant 1-6.

MISSED FIELD GOALS—None.

Ohio State will face Texas at the Cotton Bowl on Jan. 10 for a spot in the title game. While Day recognizes the significance of winning the Granddaddy of Them All, he also knows there's a lot of football left to be played.

"We knew we had to be at our best today, and it'll be the same thing next week," he said. "When you're playing in the playoffs, you're playing against very, very good teams and so we hold ourselves to a high standard. ... We're not staying the night. We're getting back on that plane, we're headed back to Columbus, we'll get some rest and then we'll focus on Texas."

College football deserves a rosy finish to the season

[**Farmer,** from B10]
every other sport has is a destination, something that is a culmination of the sport that everybody points to and says, 'That's what we want. That's where we want to go.' The NFL has the Super Bowl and that can move around.

"But as we morph into the idea of old college football and new college football, trying to find the parts of old college football that can become special in new college football is very important. The Rose Bowl game could be our Super Bowl."

It felt that way Wednesday, with half the bowl bathed in Oregon green and half in Ohio State red. Looming over the stadium's north rim, the majestic San Gabriel Mountains.

"You don't get this anywhere," said legendary Ohio State running back Archie Griffin, the only two-time Heisman Trophy winner and someone who made four consecutive trips to the Rose Bowl from 1972 to 1975.

Looking down at the field from a suite before kickoff, Griffin pondered making the Rose Bowl a regular host of national championship games. He might live in Ohio, but in a sense he's a year-round resident of this stadium, with a bronze statue of him in front.

"Fans would love to come out here," he said. "I don't know how you wouldn't. I'm not sure what's behind the decision making and how that can happen, but you've got to give it very serious consideration."

Like everything in the sport — from multimillion-dollar NIL deals to the transfer portal to the dissolution and reforming of conferences — the College Football Playoff is in figure-it-out mode. This is the first year of the new format, expanded from four schools to 12.

Oregon-Ohio State was a quarterfinal game, with the semifinals Jan. 9 and 10 at the homes of the Miami Dolphins and Dallas Cowboys, and the national championship Jan. 20 on the Atlanta Falcons' field.

Yes, some might refer to those as the Orange, Cotton and Peach bowls, but this whole process has distinct NFL overtones.

It might be the familiar Buckeyes in the Rose Bowl, but so much about new college football is keeping eyes on the bucks.

All the more reason college football needs to honor its past and lean into what makes it special.

Klatt is a proponent of starting the season a week earlier, with the Army-Navy game. The season would culminate with the championship game at the Rose Bowl, instead of drifting into January in the shadow of the NFL playoffs.

"Playing a national championship on a Monday night on Jan. 20 is one of the most asinine things I've ever seen in my life," he said. "College football is played on Saturdays or on Jan. 1. That's something that we can retain as unique and special about our sport."

As is the case with the sport it hosts, the Rose Bowl is evolving. In the next five years, the 102-year-old stadium is going to undergo significant alterations intended to improve fan experience while retaining the venue's National Historic Landmark status. That includes creating a swanky field club behind the south end zone, the first ground-level premium seating in the stadium's history.

"I firmly believe that this is the most special sporting event that we have in our country," Klatt said. "This is the best football venue we have in our country. Why not make it the national championship?"

Like a running back tucking away the football, the CFP can carve a new path forward, but it should put a vice-like grip on what made fans fall in love with the sport in the first place.

NFL STANDINGS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

West	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
y-RAMS	10	6	0	.625	342	356
e-Seattle	9	7	0	.563	345	343
e-Arizona	7	9	0	.438	353	355
e-San Francisco	6	10	0	.375	365	389
North	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**PF**	**PA**
x-Detroit	14	2	0	.875	533	333
x-Minnesota	14	2	0	.875	423	301
x-Green Bay	11	5	0	.688	438	314
e-Chicago	4	12	0	.250	286	348
South	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**PF**	**PA**
Tampa Bay	9	7	0	.563	475	366
Atlanta	8	8	0	.500	351	379
e-New Orleans	5	11	0	.313	319	371
e-Carolina	4	12	0	.250	297	496
East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**PF**	**PA**
y-Philadelphia	13	3	0	.813	443	290
x-Washington	11	5	0	.688	462	372
e-Dallas	7	9	0	.438	331	445
e-N.Y. Giants	3	13	0	.188	260	395

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

West	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
*-Kansas City	15	1	0	.938	385	288
x-CHARGERS	10	6	0	.625	368	281
Denver	9	7	0	.563	387	311
e-Las Vegas	4	12	0	.250	289	400
North	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**PF**	**PA**
x-Baltimore	11	5	0	.688	483	351
x-Pittsburgh	10	6	0	.625	363	328
Cincinnati	8	8	0	.500	453	417
e-Cleveland	3	13	0	.188	248	400
South	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**PF**	**PA**
y-Houston	9	7	0	.563	349	358
e-Indianapolis	7	9	0	.438	351	404
e-Jacksonville	4	12	0	.250	297	409
e-Tennessee	3	13	0	.188	297	437
East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**PF**	**PA**
y-Buffalo	13	3	0	.813	509	345
Miami	8	8	0	.500	325	332
e-N.Y. Jets	4	12	0	.250	306	384
e-New England	3	13	0	.188	266	401

x-clinched playoff spot; y-clinched division
e-eliminated; *-clinched division and bye

MONDAY'S RESULT

Detroit 40, San Francisco 34

SATURDAY'S GAMES

Cleveland at Baltimore, 1:30 p.m.
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 5 p.m.

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Seattle at RAMS, 1:25 p.m.
CHARGERS at Las Vegas, 1:25 p.m.
Buffalo at New England, 10 a.m.
Carolina at Atlanta, 10 a.m.
Chicago at Green Bay, 10 a.m.
Houston at Tennessee, 10 a.m.
Jacksonville at Indianapolis, 10 a.m.
N.Y. Giants at Philadelphia, 10 a.m.
New Orleans at Tampa Bay, 10 a.m.
Washington at Dallas, 10 a.m.
Kansas City at Denver, 1:25 p.m.
Miami at N.Y. Jets, 1:25 p.m.
San Francisco at Arizona, 1:25
Minnesota at Detroit, 5:20 p.m.

PRO BOWL ROSTERS

AFC

Offense
Quarterbacks: Josh Allen, Buffalo*; Joe Burrow, Cincinnati; Lamar Jackson, Baltimore
Wide receivers: Ja'Marr Chase, Cincinnati*; Nico Collins, Houston; Zay Flowers, Baltimore; Jerry Jeudy, Cleveland*
Tight ends: Brock Bowers, Las Vegas*; Travis Kelce, Kansas City
Running backs: Derrick Henry, Baltimore*; Joe Mixon, Houston; Jonathan Taylor, Indianapolis
Fullback: Patrick Ricard, Baltimore*
Tackles: Dion Dawkins, Buffalo*; Rayshawn Slater, CHARGERS; Laremy Tunsil, Houston*
Guards: Quenton Nelson, Indianapolis*; Trey Smith, Kansas City; Joe Thuney, Kansas City*
Centers: Creed Humphrey, Kansas City*; Tyler Linderbaum, Baltimore
Defense
Defensive ends: Maxx Crosby, Las Vegas; Myles Garrett, Cleveland*; Trey Hendrickson, Cincinnati
Interior linemen: Cameron Heyward, Pittsburgh*; Chris Jones, Kansas City*; Nnamdi Madubuike, Baltimore
Outside linebackers: Nik Bonitto, Denver*; Khalil Mack, CHARGERRS; T.J. Watt, Pittsburgh*
Middle/inside linebackers: Zaire Franklin, Indianapolis; Roquan Smith, Baltimore*
Cornerbacks: Marlon Humphrey, Baltimore; Derek Stingley Jr., Houston*; Pat Surtain II, Denver*; Denzel Ward, Cleveland
Free safety: Minkah Fitzpatrick, Pittsburgh*
Strong safeties: Kyle Hamilton, Baltimore*; Derwin James, CHARGERS
Specialists
Punter: Logan cooke, Jacksonville*
Kicker: Chris Boswell, Pittsburgh*
Long snapper: Ross Matiscik, Jacksonville*
Return specialist: Marvin Mims Jr. Denver*
Special teamer: Benden Schooler, New England*

NFC

Offense
Quarterbacks: Jayden Daniels, Washington; Sam Darnold, Minnesota; Jared Goff, Detroit*
Wide receivers: Justin Jefferson, Minnesota*; CeeDee Lamb, Dallas; Terry McLaurin, Washington; Amon-Ra St. Brown, Detroit*
Tight ends: George Kittle, San Francisco*; Trey McBride, Arizona
Running backs: Saquon Barkley, Philadelphia*; Jahmyr Gibbs, Detroit; Josh Jacobs, Green Bay
Fullback: Kyle Juszczyk, San Francisco*
Tackles: Lane Johnson, Philadelphia*; Penei Sewell, Detroit*; Tristan Wirfs, Tampa Bay
Guards: Landon Dickerson, Philadelphia*; Chris Lindstrom, Atlanta; Tyler Smith, Dallas*
Centers: Cam Jurgens, Philadelphia; Frank Ragnow, Detroit*
Defense
Defensive ends: Nick Bosa, San Francisco*; Rashan Gary, Green Bay; Micah Parsons, Dallas*
Interior linemen: Jalen Carter, Philadelphia*; Dexter Lawrence, New York Giants*; Vita Vea, Tampa Bay
Outside linebackers: Jonathan Greenard, Minnesota*; Andrew Van Ginkel, Minnesota*; Jared Verse, RAMS
Inside/middle linebackers: Zack Baun, Philadelphia; Fred Warner, San Francisco*
Cornerbacks: Jaycee Horn, Carolina; Jaylon Johnson, Chicago*; Byron Murphy*, Minnesota; Devon Witherspoon, Seattle
Free safety: Xavier McKinney, Green Bay*
Strong safeties: Budda Baker, Arizona*; Brian Branch, Detroit
Specialists
Punter: Jack Fox, Detroit*
Kicker: Brandon Aubrey, Dallas*
Long snapper: Andre DePaola, Minnesota*
Reurn specialist: KaVontae Turpin, Dallas*
Special teamer: KhaDarel Hodge, Atlanta*
*-starter

PHELAN M. EBENHACK Associated Press

AZEEZ AL-SHAAIR was suspended three games for his Dec. 1 hit on Trevor Lawrence of Jacksonville. Al-Shaair said foster kids helped lift him out of his rut.

Texan says suspension put him in a 'dark place'

Linebacker Al-Shaair wondered if he'd play football again after hit on Jaguars' Lawrence.

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN

HOUSTON — Houston Texans linebacker Azeez Al-Shaair said he was in a "really dark place" and wondered if he'd ever play football again in the days after he was suspended for three games for his hit on Jacksonville's Trevor Lawrence that left the quarterback with a concussion.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday for the first time since the suspension, Al-Shaair discussed his state of mind during his absence.

"The things that you can think when somebody says they're in a dark place, as dark as you can go is where I was truthfully," he said.

Al-Shaair added that "it was hard for me to see myself playing football again" before he met with NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and league executives Troy Vincent and Jon Runyan.

Lawrence clenched both fists after the hit — movements consistent with the "fencing response," which can be common after a traumatic brain injury. He was on the ground for several minutes as teammates came to his defense and mobbed Al-Shaair in what escalated into a brawl.

As Al-Shaair was leaving the field after being ejected, fans started screaming at him. Jaguars veteran guard Brandon Scherff joined in, prompting another altercation with Al-Shaair. Texans teammate Will Anderson grabbed Al-Shaair and was escorting him off the field when a fan threw a water bottle and hit Anderson in the helmet.

Al-Shaair said that he understood the suspension, but disagreed with how he was characterized by Runyan in the letter informing him of the punishment. It included Runyan telling Al-Shaair: "Your lack of sportsmanship and respect for the game of football and all those who play, coach, and enjoy watching it, is troubling and does not reflect the core values of the NFL."

He said he needed to talk to Runyan and other NFL executives to understand how they viewed him as a player before he could return to the field.

"I really had a moment of, there's no way I can go out and play football again if this is how people that I work with view me," Al-Shaair said.

He said Runyan told him that he was watching the play and the melee when he wrote the letter and that he was only referring to those moments and not his entire career in his comments about his sportsmanship.

"But the way he typed it, he said got obviously taken out of context," Al-Shaair said. "I clearly made a mistake [and] the reason why he typed something which ended up being taken out of context as a mistake is because I did something that was obviously not right, me taking my helmet off and me starting another brawl ... wasn't right.

"But everything prior to that I stand on the fact that I never tried to hurt him," he continued.

Al-Shaair said he sat in a room not doing anything for about five days after his suspension.

"It's like a blur," he said. "I didn't eat nothing. I didn't go anywhere."

By Friday of that week, some children at a foster care organization in Tennessee whom he had met last year sent him messages of encouragement.

"I got so many different messages like that and I remember just sitting in my bed and I was like: 'Man, like I can just keep sitting here sad and sulking and just feeling like I'm being misjudged or I can just do what I always do, which is just try to be positive and spread positivity, do the best that I can,'" he said.

He booked a plane ticket to Nashville and got there in time to attend the same event at the foster care organization that he'd attended the previous year.

"I had so many people saying so many negative things and to see people that were happy to see me and were happy about my presence, I think that's what kind of like snapped me back," Al-Shaair said. "Like regardless of what's being said, you know who you are and just lean into that and ... from there just crawling myself out of this place."

When the AFC South champion Texans (9-7) face the Titans on Sunday, he'll return for the first time since the hit on Lawrence, and coach DeMeco Ryans is thrilled to have him back. The Texans have been hit hard by injuries and are limping into the playoffs after two straight losses.

"We've missed him over these past three weeks, just missed his presence, his leadership, missed his playmaking ability on the field," Ryans said. "So, we're excited to get him back out there and let him knock some of the rust off."

Rieken writes for the Associated Press.

Chargers Mack, James, Slater earn Pro Bowl spots

[**Pro Bowl,** from B10]
defensive front that included tackle Kobie Turner, a 2023 finalist for rookie defensive player of the year. Second-year edge rusher Byron Young, tackle Bobby Brown III, outside linebacker Michael Hoecht and fellow rookie Braden Fiske are among other players who have helped the Rams make up for the loss of future Hall of Famer Aaron Donald, who retired after last season.

Verse, 24, ranks fourth on the Rams in sacks. Turner and Fiske both have eight, Young seven. Young has a team-best 12 tackles for losses, Verse 11.

Verse had a sack in the season-opening overtime defeat at Detroit but missed several opportunities for sacks and tackles for losses the next week against Arizona and quarterback Kyler Murray. His most productive four-game stretch came after the Rams returned from their off week. He had five quarterback hits in a victory over the Las Vegas Raiders, recorded 1½ sacks in a victory over the Minnesota Vikings and also had sacks in a victory over the Seahawks and a loss against the Miami Dolphins.

Mack earned his ninth career Pro Bowl selection with six sacks, 15 quarterback hits, six tackles for loss and nine pass breakups. The 11-year veteran is the only player in the NFL this season to have at least five sacks and nine pass breakups.

With Mack and James leading the way, the Chargers have the league's best scoring defense, allowing 17.6 points per game entering Week 18.

James notched a career-best 5 ½ sacks this season to earn his fourth Pro Bowl appearance while ranking second on the Chargers with 90 tackles. The former first-round pick is the only defensive back in the NFL this season to have 85 tackles, three sacks, an interception and five pass breakups.

Slater returns to the Pro Bowl for the first time since his rookie season. The 25-year-old is Pro Football Focus' third-best rated blocking tackle, ranking third in pass blocking and fifth in run blocking. On Tuesday, the NFL announced he was leading the fan voting for all AFC tackles, surpassing rookie teammate Joe Alt, who was a fan favorite early in the season.

Mahomes left out

Nine Baltimore Ravens, including two-time NFL MVP Lamar Jackson and Derrick Henry, were selected for the Pro Bowl. The Detroit Lions are next with seven players and the Minnesota Vikings and Philadelphia Eagles each have six players on the NFC roster.

Patrick Mahomes wasn't selected to the AFC roster for the first time since becoming Kansas City's starting quarterback in his second season. Mahomes, a three-time Super Bowl MVP and six-time Pro Bowl pick, wasn't among five Chiefs chosen. Teammate Travis Kelce made it for the 10th time.

Washington's Jayden Daniels is just the fourth rookie quarterback since 1970 selected to the initial Pro Bowl roster. Raiders tight end Brock Bowers and Verse are the other rookies among 24 players.

Detroit's Jared Goff is the NFC's starting quarterback and Minnesota's Sam Darnold also made the team. The AFC's starting quarterback is Buffalo's Josh Allen. Jackson and Cincinnati's Joe Burrow are the backups.

Philadelphia's Saquon Barkley, who became the ninth player to rush for 2,000 yards, is the NFC's starting running back.

San Francisco's Kyle Juszczyk was selected to his ninth Pro Bowl, the most by a fullback. Indianapolis' Quenton Nelson is the third offensive lineman since 1970 to be selected to the Pro Bowl in each of his first seven seasons.

Cincinnati's Ja'Marr Chase is the fourth wide receiver to be selected in each of his first four seasons. Dallas' Micah Parsons is the first defensive player chosen in each of his first four seasons since Donald went to 10 straight.

Wide receiver Zay Flowers, safety Kyle Hamilton, cornerback Marlon Humphrey, center Tyler Linderbaum, defensive tackle Nnamdi Madubuike, fullback Patrick Ricard and inside linebacker Roquan Smith are the other Ravens.

Safety Brian Branch, running back Jahmyr Gibbs, center Frank Ragnow, right tackle Penei Sewell, wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown and punter Jack Fox join Goff from the Lions.

Wide receiver Justin Jefferson, outside linebackers Andrew Van Ginkel and Jonathan Greenard, cornerback Byron Murphy and long snapper Andrew DePaola are the other Vikings.

Right tackle Lane Johnson, center Cam Jurgens, left guard Landon Dickerson, defensive tackle Jalen Carter and inside linebacker Zack Baun are going from Philadelphia. The Dolphins, Jets, Titans and Saints are not represented.

This is the third year of the Pro Bowl Games after the NFL eliminated its full-contact all-star game and replaced it with weeklong skills competitions and a flag football game.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

THE DAY IN SPORTS

Defense stifles Georgia, carries Irish into the semifinals

WIRE REPORTS

Riley Leonard passed for a touchdown, Jayden Harrison returned a kickoff 98 yards for a score, and Notre Dame's defense made it hold up in a 23-10 victory over No. 2 Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on Thursday night that sends the third-ranked Fighting Irish into the semifinals of the College Football Playoff.

In a game that was delayed by a day because of a deadly terror attack in the host city, Notre Dame (13-1) made enough big plays and got some help from a clever move by coach **Marcus Freeman**.

Georgia (11-2) was in position to close within one score when Notre Dame stopped it on fourth-and-five from the Irish nine-yard line with 9:29 to go.

Then, on fourth-and-short deep in his own territory, Freeman sent the punt team out before running all 11 players off the field and sending the offense out. Georgia raced to match up and then jumped offside as the play clock ticked down, giving the Irish a clock-sapping first down with 7:17 to go.

By the time the Bulldogs got the ball back, just 1:49 remained.

Leonard finished with 90 yards passing and a team-high 80 yards rushing.

MATTHEW HINTON Associated Press

NOTRE DAME'S Jayden Harrison (2) returns a kickoff 98 yards for a touchdown to open the second half against Georgia. The score gave the Irish a 20-3 lead.

ETC.

New Mexico State fires AD

New Mexico State is moving on from athletic director **Mario Moccia** in the wake of an investigation that criticized the school's handling of the sexual-abuse scandal that temporarily shut down the Aggies men's basketball program.

Valerio Ferme, who took over as university president to start the year, announced Moccia's dismissal and that **Amber Burdge**, NMSU's deputy athletic director for strategic initiatives and leadership, would be acting athletic director.

UCLA football coach **DeShaun Foster** announced the hiring of **Bailey McElwain** as senior special teams analyst in a return to Westwood for the coach who was a special teams analyst for the Bruins in 2022. After spending the 2023 season as the tight ends coach at Northern Arizona, McElwain was a special teams quality control coach at Washington in 2024. Huskies freshman **Keith Reynolds** ranked fifth in the Big Ten with an average kickoff return of 21.9 yards and **Jack McCallister** averaged an impressive 44 yards per punt.

—BEN BOLCH

Louisville punter **Brady Hodges** said he opted out of the Sun Bowl this week because the Cardinals' NIL collective did not pay money promised to him in September. Hodges posted on social media that he had not been with the team since Dec. 10. ... Alabama quarterback **Jalen Milroe** and linebacker **Jihaad Campbell** will enter the draft after a disappointing finish to the Tide's season.

Three-time WNBA All-Star **Danielle Robinson** was hired as the Sparks' Manager of Basketball Integration and Scout Support, the organization announced.

The NWSL's 16th team is headed to Denver for a record $110-million expansion fee, Sportico.com reported on Thursday. ... The Philadelphia Union named **Bradley Carnell** as the fourth head coach in the Major League Soccer team's history on Thursday.

Bailey Zappe will start at quarterback for the Cleveland Browns on Saturday in their season finale at Baltimore, a person familiar with the decision told the Associated Press.

In Wednesday's late games, **Jimmy Butler** returned from a five-game absence because of illness, and the Miami Heat handed New Orleans its 15th consecutive road loss, 119-108. ... . Detroit Pistons guard **Jaden Ivey** had surgery on his left leg Thursday, a day after breaking his fibula in a collision during a 105-96 win over the Orlando Magic. The Pistons said Ivey will be reevaluated in four weeks.

The Colorado Avalanche will be without playmaking forward **Valeri Nichushkin** for an indefinite amount of time due to a lower-body injury. ... Minnesota Wild captain **Jared Spurgeon** is expected to miss two to three weeks with an apparent right leg injury. ... In Ottawa, Boston College teammates **James Hagens** and **Ryan Leonard** each scored twice and the defending champion United States routed Switzerland 7-2 in the world junior hockey quarterfinals.

NASCAR star **Shane van Gisbergen** walked away from a multiple-auto crash at a dirt track speedway meeting at Auckland in his native New Zealand.

CRAIG WESTON

QUINCY WATSON and the Cubs will play Chaminade in the Mission and Trinity leagues showcase on Jan. 10.

PREP TALK

Watson honing long-range shot

BY ERIC SONDHEIMER

Quincy Watson's portable hoop is left on the street adjacent to the family residence in Pacific Palisades.

From the day Watson moved to the neighborhood, the hoop has received nonstop activity in morning, afternoon and sometimes evening. People driving by should know by now it belongs to the junior guard from Loyola High who is passionate about practicing his shooting form.

So far, practice makes perfect. He's the leading scorer for the 13-3 Cubs. Coach Damaine Powell has so much confidence in Watson that he's given him the green light to pretty much shoot from anywhere — as long as he knows he can make it.

Watson figures to be working on his long-range shots because Loyola is scheduled to play in the Mission and Trinity leagues showcase at the Intuit Dome on Jan. 10. Loyola will play Chaminade at 12:30 p.m.

Watson just needs to make sure the hoop stays out of the way of cars. You never know, one of those L.A. drivers who like to honk horns might get upset. ...

Since Washington Prep got a group of transfer students from defending City Section champion King/Drew eligible on Dec. 27, the Generals are 3-0. All-City guard Donald Thompson Jr. leads the group.

Games to mark down on the calendar include Jan. 22 against King/Drew at Washington Prep and Feb. 7 at King/Drew. ...

Hamilton (7-2) and Westchester (10-3) are looking to be prime challengers to Birmingham (9-5) for the City Section Open Division girls' basketball title. They play in a big Western League opener Monday at Westchester.

Parks embraces tough new role

Gary Parks, a 1991 Verbum Dei graduate, knows the challenges ahead after accepting the job as head football coach at his alma mater.

"Verbum Dei is home for me," he said.

Parks, who was head coach at Maya Angelou in the City Section for five years, is bringing with him four Verbum Dei graduates as assistants. If anyone knows how to build a winning program at the all-boys Catholic school in Watts, it's Parks, who was an assistant coach for the 2006 championship team and helped put together a schedule to deal with the requirement of all students participating in work study.

"I know how the work study works," he said. "The administration has changed and this one is awesome."

There are 22 players in the program. Verbum Dei went 0-10 in 2023 and was 0-7 last season when the program was suspended for safety reasons after roster numbers had dropped.

"The first priority is to build up morale," Parks said. "I welcome the challenge."

It's not every day you get a chance to try to reverse fortunes at your alma mater.

"We're all going home," Parks said.

Camarillo to honor alumnus Jaquez Jr.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. of the Miami Heat is scheduled to have his No. 24 jersey at Camarillo High retired Jan. 14 during a ceremony before the Scorpions' game against Simi Valley.

The Heat are playing the Clippers on Jan. 13 and the Lakers on Jan. 15, so the Tuesday between is the perfect day to honor Camarillo's hometown hero who went on to star for UCLA and became a first-round NBA draft pick.

Jaquez helped bring respect to Ventura County basketball. He averaged 31 points as a junior in 2018, graduated in 2019 and has continued to support his school through contributions of equipment and clothing.

LENNY RANDLE, 1949 - 2024

Colorful player stirred baseball's pot

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lenny Randle, a big league player for 12 seasons who spoke five languages, performed stand-up comedy, was dubbed "The Most Interesting Man in Baseball" and was suspended for punching his Texas Rangers manager, has died. He was 75.

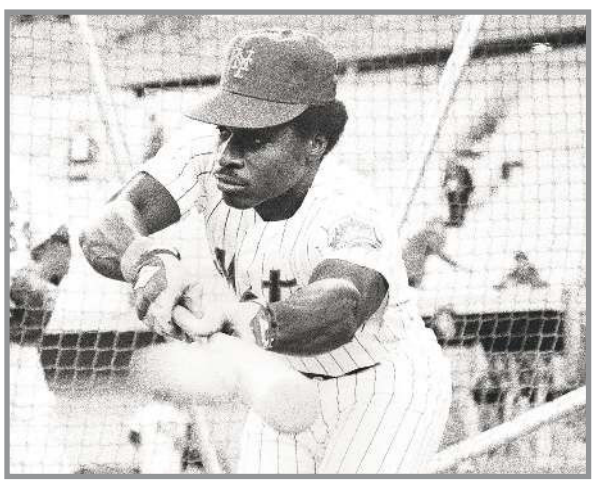
Randle died Sunday at his home in Murrieta, one of his sons, Bradley, said Tuesday. Bradley said Randle's wife, Linda, asked that the cause of death not be publicly disclosed.

Randle helped win the 1969 College World Series with Arizona State, where he also played football. He was selected 10th overall by Washington in the secondary phase of the 1970 amateur draft and made his debut for the Senators on June 16, 1971. He got his first hit when he beat out an infield single against Vida Blue.

Randle hit .257 with 27 homers, 322 RBIs and 156 stolen bases for the Senators/Rangers (1971-76), New York Mets (1977-78), New York Yankees (1979), Chicago Cubs (1980) and Seattle Mariners (1981-82).

But he was known more for a series of memorable moments rather than his on-field accomplishments and was dubbed "The Most Interesting Man in Baseball" by Rolling Stone magazine, a title used for an MLB Network documentary in 2015.

Randle was on the bench for the Senators' last game in 1971 when fans invaded the field; bunted to the right side to collide with Cleveland pitcher Milt Wilcox in 1974 and spark a brawl, in retaliation for a pitch being thrown behind him; was at second base during the Ten Cent Beer Night riot at Cleveland later that season; was in the batter's box to face the Chicago Cubs' Ray Burris when power went out at Shea Stadium during the blackout on July 13, 1977; was the Yankees' roster replacement for Thurman Munson after the catcher's death in August 1979; and famously got on his hands and knees to blow Amos Otis' slow roller foul on May 27, 1981, which plate umpire Larry McCoy decided was against the rules and ruled a hit.



RICHARD DREW Associated Press

'MOST INTERESTING MAN IN BASEBALL'
Lenny Randle earned that title from Rolling Stone magazine after run-ins both on and off the field. He also played in Italy and performed stand-up.

"I yelled at the ball foul. I didn't blow it," Randle told MLB Network in January 2024, saying he kept repeating: "Go foul."

In his role as a youth baseball coach, Randle distributed T-shirts that read: "Don't Blow It, Go to College."

Randle's tenure with the Rangers ended when he punched manager Frank Lucchesi on March 28, 1977. Randle had lost his second base job to Bump Wills during spring training and asked to be traded if he wasn't going to play regularly. Lucchesi told media he was tired of "$80,000-a-year punks" complaining.

Randle punched Lucchesi three times before a spring training game against Minnesota, and the manager sustained a fractured right cheekbone and needed plastic surgery. Randle said he approached Lucchesi along the third base line to talk to him and Lucchesi told him: "What do you got to say, punk?"

"All I wanted to do was talk to him," Randle said then. "I never thought it would come to this, but I guess these things happen in life sometimes."

Texas suspended Randle for 30 days, fined him $10,000 and withheld $13,407.90 of his $80,000 salary.

Randle issued a public apology. He was charged with felony aggravated battery by Orange County, pleaded no contest to misdemeanor battery and was fined $1,050.

In 1978, he settled a civil suit filed by Lucchesi.

Randle was traded to the Mets on April 26 for a player to be named, who turned out to be second baseman Rick Auerbach. Randle agreed to a five-year contract with the Mets and briefly held out during spring training in 1978 in hope of a restructured deal.

He was released by the Mets in March 1979 and signed in May with the Giants.

After spending 1½ months at triple A, Randle was traded to Pittsburgh. His contract was purchased by the Yankees that August.

After his release by the Mariners, Randle became the first American to play in the Italian baseball league, with Nettuno in 1983. He kept a home in Anzio.

"Playing baseball in Italy was like finding the fountain of youth," Randle said in 1995, when he attempted an MLB comeback with the California Angels. "Guys go over there and learn how to relax and enjoy the game. It's easy, because there's no stress."

Randle performed at stand-up clubs after games and released a funk song "Kingdome" by Lenny Randle & the Ballplayers.

He is survived by his wife, the former Linda Bradley; three sons, Bradley, Kumasi and Ahmad; and three grandchildren. A celebration of life is planned.

PRO CALENDAR

	FRI 3	SAT 4	SUN 5	MON 6	TUE 7
RAMS			**SEATTLE** 1:25 Ch. 11		
CHARGERS			**at Las Vegas** 1:25 Ch. 2		
LAKERS	**ATLANTA** 7:30 SpecSN, NBA TV		**at Houston** 4 SpecSN		**at Dallas** 4:30 SpecSN, TNT, truTV
CLIPPERS		**ATLANTA** 7:30 FDSC, NBA TV		**at Minnesota** 5 FDSC	
KINGS		**TAMPA BAY** 6 FDW			
DUCKS	**at Edmonton** 6 Ch. 13, Victory+		**TAMPA BAY** 5 Ch. 13, Victory+		**CALGARY** 7 Victory+

Shade denotes home game

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
BASKETBALL		
5 p.m.	New York at Oklahoma City	**TV:** NBA
7:30 p.m.	Atlanta at Lakers	**TV:** SpecSN, NBA **R:** 710, 1330
COLLEGE BASKETBALL: MEN		
3 p.m.	Akron at Bowling Green	**TV:** CBSSN
4 p.m.	Wichita State at Temple	**TV:** ESPN2
4 p.m.	Iowa at Wisconsin	**TV:** FS1
5 p.m.	Michigan State at Ohio State	**TV:** 11
5 p.m.	Xavier at Georgetown	**TV:** CBSSN
6 p.m.	Creighton at Marquette	**TV:** FS1
6 p.m.	Saint Joseph's at Saint Louis	**TV:** ESPN2
8 p.m.	Nevada at New Mexico	**TV:** FS1
COLLEGE FOOTBALL		
1 p.m.	First Responder Bowl, North Texas vs. Texas State	**TV:** ESPN, ESPND
4:30 p.m.	Duke's Mayo Bowl, Minnesota vs. Virginia Tech	**TV:** ESPN, ESPND
COLLEGE HOCKEY		
2 p.m.	Men, Ohio State vs. Michigan	**TV:** Big Ten
3 p.m.	Men, Denver at Maine	**TV:** ESPNU
5:30 p.m.	Men, Penn State vs. Notre Dame	**TV:** Big Ten
CORNHOLE		
8 p.m.	ACL, National High School Championship, doubles	**TV:** ESPN2
GOLF		
3 p.m.	PGA Tour, The Sentry, second round	**TV:** Golf
HOCKEY		
4 p.m.	Pittsburgh at Florida	**TV:** NHL
6 p.m.	Ducks at Edmonton	**TV:** 13, Victory+ **R:** Ducks stream
Midnight (Sat.)	Women's U18 World Championship, U.S. vs. Japan	**TV:** NHL
HORSE RACING		
Noon	America's Day at the Races	**TV:** FS2
SOCCER		
11 a.m.	Italian Supercoppa, Juventus vs. AC Milan	**TV:** Paramount+
10 a.m.	Spanish Cup, Racing Ferrol vs. Rayo Vallecano	**TV:** ESPN+
10 a.m.	Spanish Cup, Granada vs. Getafe	**TV:** ESPN+
10 a.m.	Spanish Cup, Pontevedra vs. Mallorca	**TV:** ESPN+
Noon	France, Nice vs. Rennes	**TV:** beIN
Noon	Spain, Valencia vs. Real Madrid	**TV:** ESPN+, ESPND
4:30 a.m. (Sat.)	England, Tottenham vs. Newcastle	**TV:** USA, Peacock, Universo
6 a.m. (Sat.)	Italy, Venice vs. Empoli	**TV:** CBSSN, Paramount+
6:30 a.m. (Sat.)	Spanish Cup, Huesca vs. Betis	**TV:** ESPN+
TENNIS		
6 a.m.	United Cup, quarterfinals; ATP/WTA Brisbane, ATP Hong Kong, WTA Auckland, quarterfinals	**TV:** Tennis
3 p.m.	United Cup, semifinals; ATP/WTA Brisbane, ATP Hong Kong, WTA Auckland, semifinals	**TV:** Tennis

Kuemper and Kings blank reeling Devils

The goaltender makes 32 saves in his 33rd career shutout as L.A. wins its third in a row.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Andre Lee scored his first NHL goal, Darcy Kuemper recorded his second shutout of the season and the Kings beat the New Jersey Devils 3-0 on Wednesday at Crypto.com Arena for their third straight win.

Quinton Byfield also scored for the Kings, and Adrian Kempe added an empty-netter with 4:25 to play. Kuemper made 32 saves for his 33rd career shutout.

Byfield, who has three goals and five points in the last three games, made it 2-0 at 11:01 of the third period. The forward came out of the penalty box and put a wrist shot past Jake Allen.

The Kings extended their home winning streak to eight games.

They're 13-2-1 at home with a league-best .844 winning percentage.

Lee opened the scoring 6:23 into the second period when he skated under a puck flung high up the ice by Jordan Spence and split two Devils defensemen to beat Allen. Lee, a 24-year-old Swedish forward drafted in the seventh round in 2019, finally scored in his 19th game after making his NHL debut in the Oct. 10 opener.

Timo Meier appeared to even it for New Jersey in the second period, but his goal was taken off the board when the Kings successfully argued for goaltender interference against Stefan Noesen, who had been in Kuemper's crease right before Meier scored.

Allen stopped 21 shots for New Jersey. The Devils are halfway through a six-game road swing and have lost three straight in regulation for the first time.

A day after they fell out of first place in the Eastern Conference, they were shut out for the sixth time.

Anze Kopitar picked up his first penalty of the season at 12:01 of the first period.

Kopitar, the Lady Byng Trophy winner in 2016 and 2023, was given a two-minute minor for holding Luke Hughes.

WEDNESDAY'S LATE SUMMARY

KINGS 3, DEVILS 0

New Jersey	0	0	0	– 0
KINGS	0	1	2	– 3

FIRST PERIOD: Scoring–None. **Penalties–**Cotter, N.J. (Hooking), 8:01. Kopitar, KINGS (Holding), 12:01.

SECOND PERIOD: 1. KINGS, Lee 1 (Moverare, Spence), 6:23. **Penalties–**Bastian, N.J. (Cross Checking), 7:03. Danault, KINGS (Hooking), 16:29.

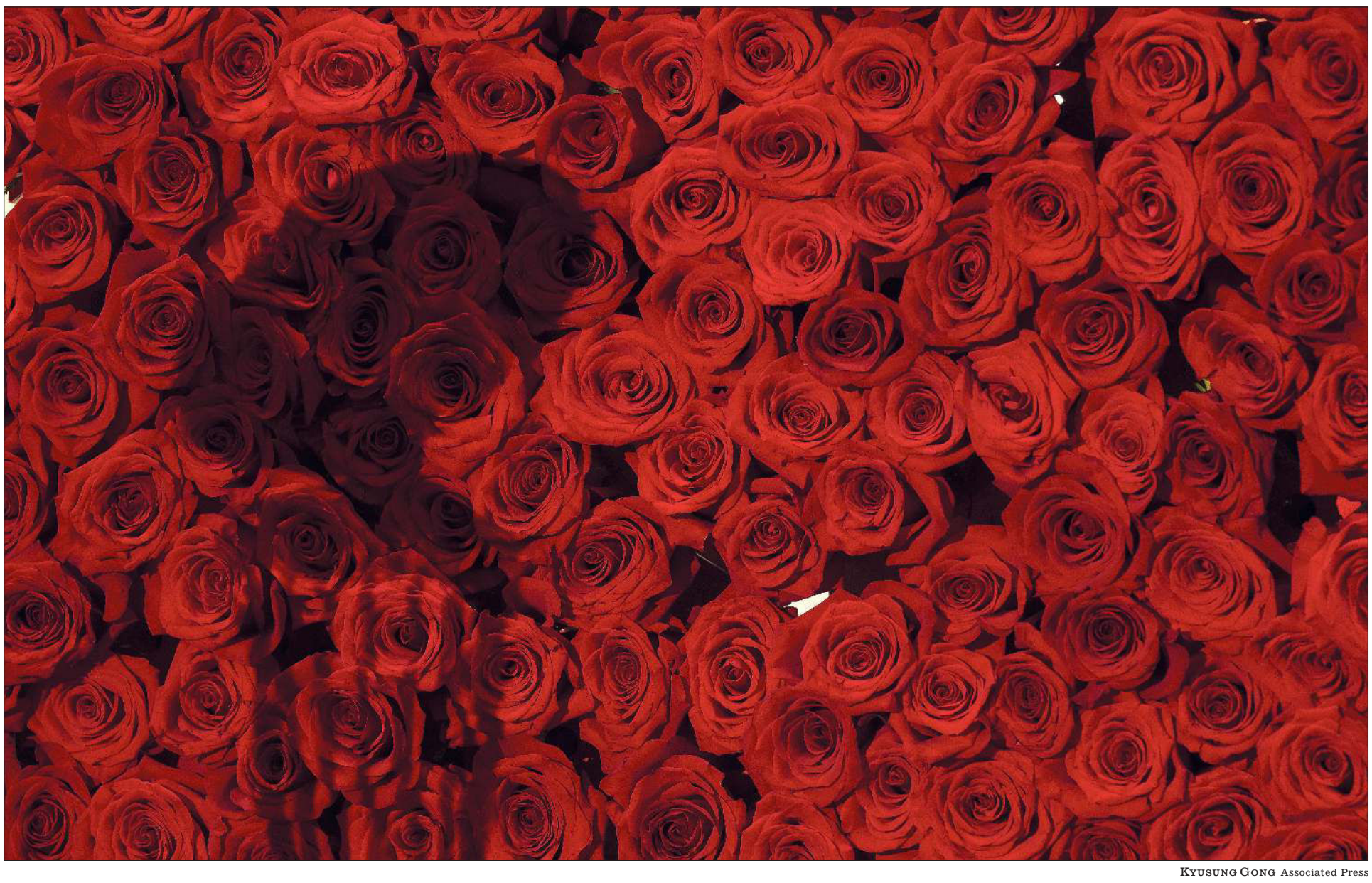
THIRD PERIOD: 2. KINGS, Byfield 9 (Anderson, Danault), 11:01. 3. KINGS, Kempe 18 (Anderson, Foegele), 15:35 (en). **Penalties–**Turcotte, KINGS (Tripping), 3:24. Cotter, N.J. (Roughing), 8:01. Byfield, KINGS (Tripping), 8:45. Turcotte, KINGS (High Sticking), 17:23.

SHOTS ON GOAL: N.J. 14-6-13–33. KINGS 8-4-12–24. Power-play Conversions–N.J. 0 of 6. KINGS 0 of 3.

GOALIES: N.J., Allen 5-7-1 (23 shots-21 saves). KINGS, Kuemper 10-2-5 (33-33). Att–18,145 (18,230). T–2:29. R–Chris Lee, Kendrick Nicholson. L–Caleb Apperson, Travis Gawryletz.

SPORTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 2025 ∷ LATIMES.COM/SPORTS



KYUSUNG GONG Associated Press

AS IS THE CASE with the sport it hosts, the Rose Bowl is evolving. In the next five years, the 102-year-old stadium is going to undergo significant alterations.

COMING UP ROSES EVEN MORE

Buckeyes knock out undefeated Ducks with rout

BY ANDRÉS SOTO

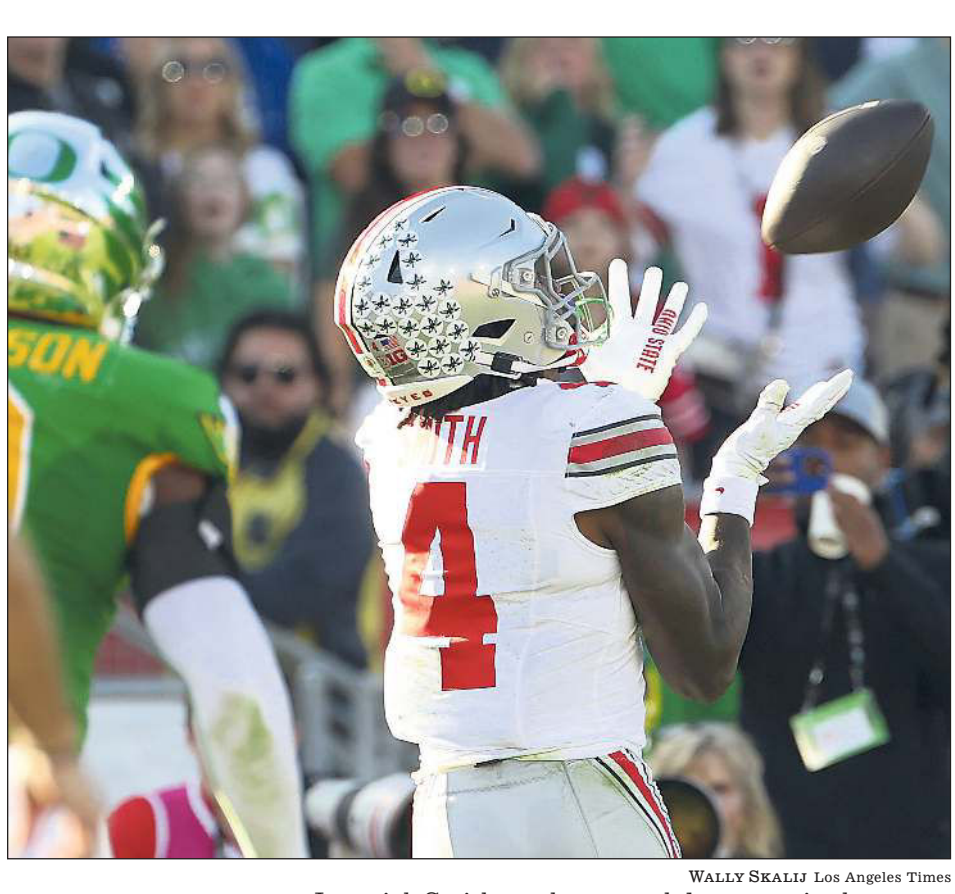
This time, Ohio State left no doubt.

The No. 8 seed Buckeyes, with their one-point October loss to No. 1 seed Oregon still on their minds, bludgeoned the undefeated Oregon Ducks 41-21 at the Rose Bowl on Wednesday, avenging that loss and advancing to a College Football Playoff semifinal against No. 5 seed Texas.

"After that game, we had a bad taste in our mouth," Ohio State freshman receiver Jeremiah Smith said. "We just had to come in the next day and see what were the issues, fix the issues, and get on the field and work it. Offensively, we had to get the ball to the perimeter, take shots, and just win our one-on-one matchups. That's what we did."

Smith set the tone for the Buckeyes on the third play of the game. On second and 10, he took a pass in the backfield off a motion, cut up the field, made the Ducks' safeties miss as they dove at his ankles and walked into the end zone for a 45-yard touchdown.

Two possessions [See **Rose Bowl,** B7]



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

BUCKEYES RECEIVER Jeremiah Smith catches a touchdown pass in the second quarter of Ohio State's 41-21 win over Oregon at the Rose Bowl on Wednesday.

The most prestigious of all the bowls should host the national title game

SAM FARMER
ON FOOTBALL

You want to talk name, image and likeness?

There's nothing more representative of college football than the Rose Bowl game.

In a shape-shifting sport, one persistently rounding into a junior version of the NFL, the tradition of the Rose Bowl is a sacred point of stability. For decades it was a destination as opposed to a whistle stop on the way to a national championship.

Why not look at this sun-splashed sanctuary the way the British Open has St. Andrews in the rotation of courses? Put a national championship here every five years. The Old Course is the birthplace of golf, and this is the birthplace of the "bowl" game, a reference to the shape of this very venue.

If the Rose Bowl is a church, then Joel Klatt is a preacher.

"This should be the national championship every single year," said Klatt, the former Colorado quarterback turned Fox analyst. "Something that college football is missing that [See **Farmer,** B7]

Rams rookie Verse, three Chargers earn Pro Bowl invites

The linebacker is honored along with defenders Mack and James, tackle Slater.

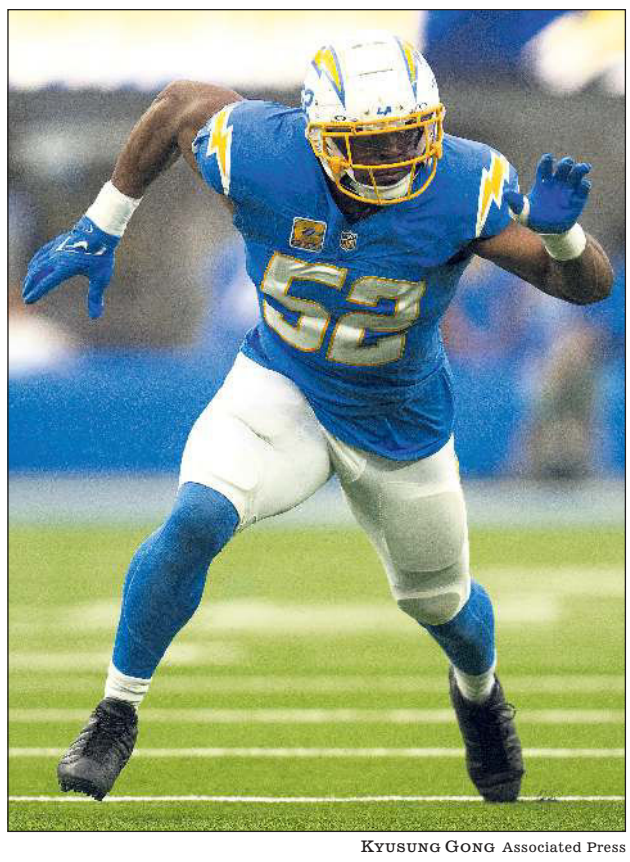
BY GARY KLEIN AND THUC NHI NGUYEN

Rams edge rusher Jared Verse is enjoying an outstanding rookie season.

The 19th player selected in the NFL draft has been an integral part of a defense that helped the Rams rebound from a 1-4 start to clinch the NFC West title and a playoff spot heading into Sunday's finale against the Seattle Seahawks.

Verse, who has 4 ½ sacks, on Thursday was voted to the Pro Bowl Games, to be held Feb. 2 in Orlando, Fla., the NFL announced.

Players were selected based on votes by players, coaches and fans, with each group representing one-third of the vote. Verse was the only Ram announced. More are expected to be among alternates.



KYUSUNG GONG Associated Press

CHARGERS linebacker Khalil Mack, who has six sacks, earned his ninth career Pro Bowl selection.

ADAM HUNGER Associated Press

JARED VERSE, the 19th pick in the draft last April, had five quarterback hits in a win over the Raiders.

NFL WEEK 18

Rams vs. Seattle
AT SOFI STADIUM
Sunday, 1:25 p.m.
TV: Channel 11

Chargers at Las Vegas
Sunday, 1:25 p.m.
TV: Channel 2

Chargers outside linebacker Khalil Mack, safety Derwin James Jr. and offensive tackle Rashawn Slater also earned Pro Bowl recognition.

Verse, a 6-foot-4, 250-pound linebacker, played in college at Albany and Florida State. He joined a Rams [See **Pro Bowl,** B8]

Watson honing his shots at home

Loyola Cubs' leading scorer practices for Jan. 10 game against Chaminade in showcase at Intuit Dome. **B9**

Al-Shaair opens up on suspension

Texans linebacker says he wondered if he'd ever play NFL again after his Dec. 1 hit that sparked a brawl. **B7**

Loud and rowdy road games for UCLA

The Bruins must adapt from playing in sleepy Pac-12 arenas to energized and noisier Big Ten venues. **B6**

Los Angeles Times

SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 2025

ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

THE LAKERS' Christian Koloko (10) knocks the ball from the Trail Blazers' Kris Murray in the first half. Koloko had eight points and eight rebounds off the bench.

James and Christie lead the way for Lakers

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

The big picture demanded that the Lakers be smart; the small picture demanded the Lakers play a little tougher Thursday night.

Anthony Davis, who missed most of the Lakers' game on Christmas, needed the night off because of lingering soreness in his sprained left ankle. Gabe Vincent needed more time to recover from an oblique strain.

Removing key pieces, especially one as critical as Davis, highlighted something JJ Redick's one-time coach Doc Rivers used to say: winning any game in the NBA is hard.

The Lakers were going to need a big night from someone they rely on and a career night from someone they're truly starting to.

LeBron James and Max Christie combined to score 66 points, Christie finishing with a career-best 28, in the host Lakers' 114-106 win over the Trail Blazers.

James hit a season-high seven threes, needing only 10 attempts, on his way to 38 points as the Lakers (19-14) fought through a rocky fourth quarter. And Christie, cementing his place as the team's shooting guard, hit five threes and aggressively cut off the ball with the Portland defense focused on James and Austin Reaves.

James and Christie shot the Lakers into a 15-point lead against one of the West's worst teams, the Lakers' defense finding its footing in the second and third quarters.

But the Trail Blazers' younger, more athletic legs and their longer, stronger arms put the Lakers in tough spots.

Reaves, for the first time since the Lakers fully gave him the keys, got pressured into shooting just five for 15 from the field. He still managed to finish with 11 assists, eight rebounds and 15 points.

Anfernee Simons led Portland (11-22) with 23 points.

The Lakers play again Friday against Atlanta at Crypto.com Arena.

— DAN WOIKE

Thunder set team record with win over Clippers

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 29 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder won their franchise-record 13th consecutive regular-season game, 116-98 over the Clippers.

The Thunder trailed by 16 in the first half before pulling within 52-48 at halftime. Shaking off a cold-shooting first half, the Thunder exploded for 42 third-quarter points and an 18-point lead heading into the fourth quarter.

Gilgeous-Alexander also had a game-high eight assists for the Thunder, who are 28-5 and have won 17 of their last 18 regular-season games. He did not play in the fourth quarter.

Jalen Williams scored 18 points and Isaiah Hartenstein added 11 points and nine rebounds for Oklahoma City.

Amir Coffey led the Clippers with 26 points.

After shooting just 31% in the first half, the Thunder wound up at an even 50% for the game and added to their league-leading steal total with 11 takeaways.

Despite the slow start, the Thunder's depth eventually overwhelmed the Clippers, who were without James Harden.

Williams hit a runner at the halftime buzzer to cut the Clippers' lead to four, then scored the first six points of the second half to jump-start a 23-5 run that put the Thunder in control.

The Clippers' Norman Powell came into the game averaging a career-high 24.3 points per game. He missed his first nine shots and didn't get a basket until eight minutes remained, finishing with six points on one-of-11 shooting, including 0-for-5 from three-point range.

DUCKS

Terry's second goal wins it in overtime

Troy Terry scored his second goal of the game at 3:34 of overtime to give the visiting Ducks a 4-3 victory over the Winnipeg Jets.

Terry added an assist in a three-point night, Radko Gudas and Leo Carlsson also scored and John Gibson stopped 27 shots for the Ducks (16-17-4), who won their third in row.

Gudas forced overtime when his screened shot from the point beat Connor Hellebuyck with 1:10 left in regulation and Gibson off for an extra attacker. It was Gudas' first goal of the season.

Bulldogs coach stands by play that backfired against Notre Dame

WIRE REPORTS

Locked in a defensive struggle in which neither team gained 300 yards, Georgia coach Kirby Smart made an aggressive but ill-fated decision late in the first half of the Sugar Bowl.

Right after Notre Dame took a 6-3 lead on a 48-yard field goal, Smart had untested sophomore quarterback Gunner Stockton drop back to pass from his 25-yard line with 38 seconds left instead of running out the clock. Defensive end RJ Oben broke through for a strip-sack, and the Fighting Irish's Junior Tuihalamaka fell on the ball at the Bulldogs 13.

One play later, Notre Dame's Riley Leonard hit Beaux Collins for a 13-yard touchdown.

Just like that, No. 2 seed Georgia (11-3) trailed 13-3 in a game in which every point was precious. The No. 7 seed Fighting Irish (13-1) went on to win the College Football Playoff quarterfinal in New Orleans 23-10, ending Smart's bid for his third national title with the Bulldogs.

"Typically when you're down, you need every possession you can have, and we made a decision that we were going to be aggressive and we were going to try to go two-minute, and that's what everything says you should do," Smart said. "You can't give up possessions when you're trailing. We felt like we had a little quick-game pass. Certainly not counting on getting beat that quick at left tackle, and got a sack-fumble, which gave them some momentum."

Actually, the Bulldogs already had lost momentum. Their previous possession lasted all of 31 seconds — counting the punt.

Taking over at his 14 with 3:40 left in the half, Stockton threw three consecutive incomplete passes — the last two while scrambling from pressure — giving Notre Dame time to move into field goal range.

But Smart continued to trust his struggling offense, even though Stockton had thrown only 35 career passes before replacing injured starter Carson Beck for the second half of the Bulldogs' 22-19 overtime victory against Texas in the SEC championship game.

While the move backfired, Smart defended his thought process.

"We got an opportunity to go score," he said. "We worked two-minute every week. I don't question that call, because I really agree with the decision to be aggressive."

Stockton went 20 of 32 for 234 yards, including a perfect strike to Arian Smith for a 67-yard gain that set up a go-ahead field goal in the second quarter and a 32-yard touchdown pass to wide-open running back Cash Jones that closed the deficit to 20-10 in the third.

GERALD HERBERT Associated Press

GEORGIA COACH Kirby Smart questions a call during the second half of Thursday's 23-10 loss to the Fighting Irish in the Sugar Bowl. Smart had sought his third national title with the Bulldogs.

The Bulldogs did very little outside those plays, though, producing 62 yards rushing while Stockton was sacked four times.

"It just hurts," guard Tate Ratledge said. "This team's got one goal, and that was to win a national championship."

Rebels rout Blue Devils 52-20 in Gator Bowl

Jaxson Dart threw for 404 yards and four touchdowns in his final collegiate game, leading No. 16 Mississippi to a 52-20 romp over Duke in the Gator Bowl on Thursday night in Jacksonville, Fla.

Dart connected with Jordan Watkins seven times for 180 yards and two scores, including a 69-yarder with 1:27 to play that got the quarterback chewed out by coach Lane Kiffin. Dart added 43 yards rushing, leaving EverBank Stadium with grass and dirt stains all over his red and white uniform.

The senior never considered opting out of the bowl game. Instead, he helped the Rebels (10-3) make history. With the victory, Ole Miss notched double-digit wins in consecutive years for the second time in program history and the first since 1959-60.

Ulysses Bentley IV, another senior playing his last college game, ran for 70 yards and two scores for the Rebels. Isaiah Hamilton returned an interception 50 yards for a touchdown early in the third quarter.

Ole Miss was a 17 ½-point favorite, according to BetMGM, mostly because the Blue Devils (9-4) were without quarterback Maalik Murphy and running back Star Thomas. Both entered the transfer portal after Duke's regular-season finale.

Third-year sophomore Henry Belin IV completed 25 of 44 passes for 236 yards, with two touchdowns and the interception.

Los Angeles Times

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Los Angeles Times E

ENTERTAINMENT

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Jimmy Carter, music lover

Nation's first 'Rock & Roll President' also was a big fan of jazz, gospel and country.

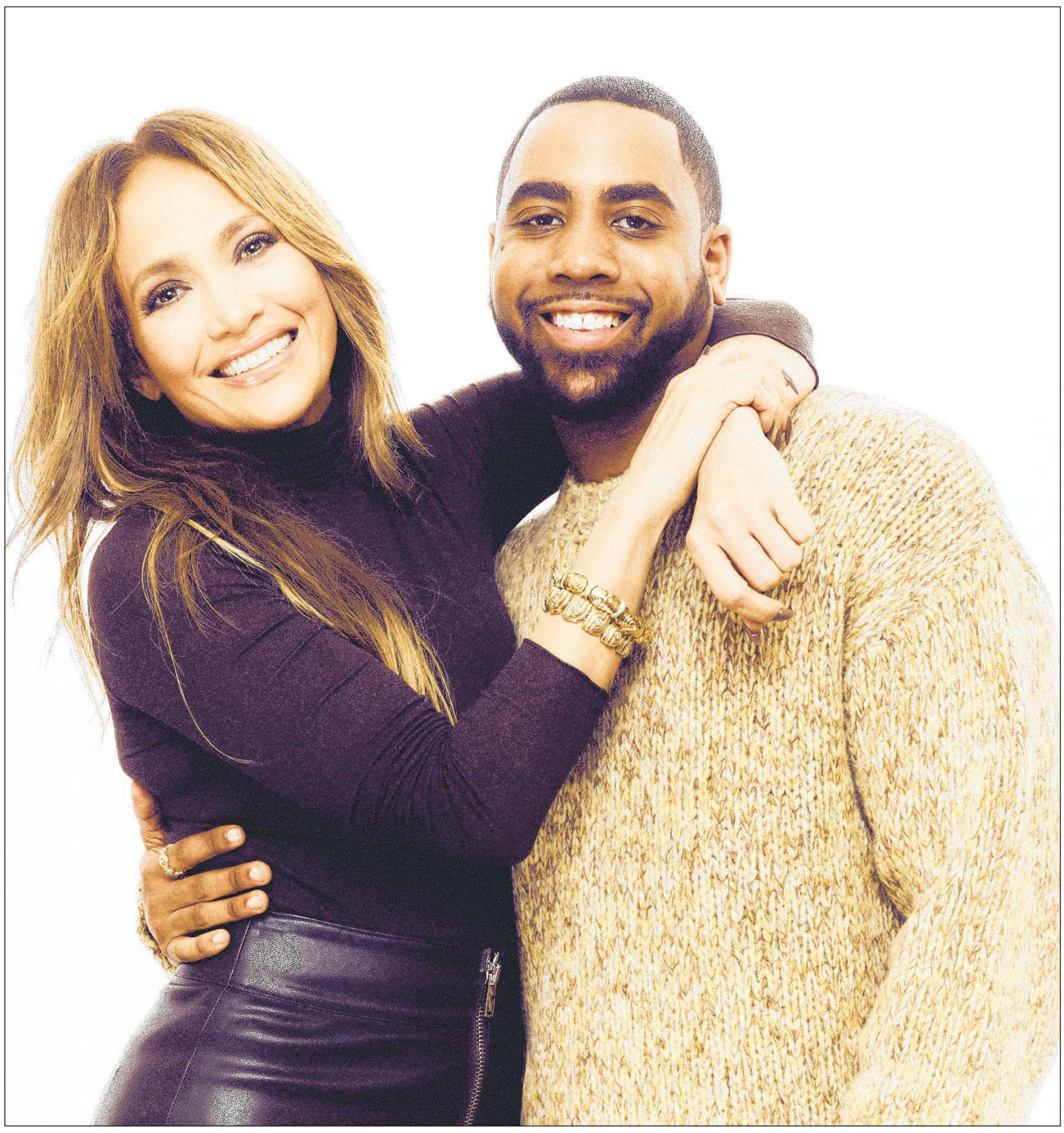
By August Brown

In January 1974, Jimmy Carter — then the governor of Georgia — hosted a post-concert reception for Bob Dylan at the governor's mansion in Atlanta. Gregg Allman of the Allman Brothers Band was on the guest list, but he had been rehearsing in Macon an hour and a half away and arrived after midnight to barely make it in the door.

That night, though, Carter and Allman became fast friends who bonded over blues records by Elmore James (the two differed in recalling how much Scotch they drank). Although the Allmans were a multiracial group of long-haired hippies and not beloved in most halls of power, Carter was a deep-cut fan and quoted the band's lyrics back to Allman. The Allmans' manager, Phil Walden, had built his career in Macon, and the band's label, Capricorn Records, soon would throw some of the first fundraising concerts that seeded Carter's long-shot bid for the presidency.

"The Allman Brothers helped put me in the White

[See **Carter,** E3]



Shayan Asgharnia For The Times

BASED ON a true story, "Unstoppable" stars Jennifer Lopez as Judy Robles, a fierce advocate for her son Anthony, played by Jharrel Jerome, who was born with one leg and overcame a multitude of obstacles to become a college wrestling champion.

NO STOPPING THIS DUO'S CONNECTION

Jennifer Lopez and Jharrel Jerome on perseverance and strength in 'Unstoppable'

By Yvonne Villarreal

Be careful," Jennifer Lopez says, "because they're going to make fun of you for years and years and years about it."

It's mid-November, and Lopez and Jharrel Jerome have convened at The Times' offices in El Segundo to discuss their new film, "Unstoppable," which opened theatrically in December and begins streaming on Prime Video Jan. 16.

Based on a true story, the film follows Anthony Robles (Jerome) on his journey to become college wrestling's national champion in 2011 despite being born with only one leg. Lopez plays Judy Robles, Anthony's mother and greatest advocate. In chronicling the former Arizona State University wrestler's improbable journey, the film pays tribute to Anthony's relationship with his mother and the way the pair pushed each other to dream bigger lives for themselves.

It's fitting, then, that the actors portraying mother and son can tap into the playfulness of that dynamic as easily as they mine its depths.

Like in this moment, when, in pointing out that they both hail from the Bronx, Jerome is asked what his go-to bodega order is — a play on Lopez's viral moment from Vogue's "73 Questions" in 2022, in which she stated, "Ham and cheese on a roll, a small bag of chips and an orange drink, if you know you know" and was mercilessly mocked. Hence Lopez's parental warning.

"What was wrong with your answer?" Jerome says, turning to his co-star. "I don't know, it was just the truth," Lopez says. "I just was like, these little quarter drinks. I just remember them."

"Maybe you just talked about it too sweet — the quarter drinks," he says. "For me, it's bacon, egg and cheese — I just go with the classic — and Arizona iced tea, when I was a kid. But I elevated my palate to a chopped cheese, eventually."

"A what?" she says.

"A chopped cheese," Jerome says. "You don't know what a chopped cheese is? This is why they were yelling at you probably because, right now, the hot thing at the bodega is a chopped cheese."

Teasing aside, it's clear that both actors

[See **'Unstoppable,'** E2]

Netflix / BBC / Broke & Bones

DIANE MORGAN as Philomena Cunk in new series "Cunk on Life."

Playing the fool suits her just fine

As know-nothing TV pundit Philomena Cunk, Diane Morgan goes straight for laughs.

By Meredith Blake

Some kids aspire to be doctors, astronauts, teachers or firefighters. Growing up in Bolton, a former mill town in the north of England, Diane Morgan was interested in one thing: comedy. She watched a lot of it, mostly British. Peter Sellers, "Fawlty Towers," Monty Python.

When she landed in drama school, she told the head of the program, " 'Look, I'm not here for the Shakespeare' — so they gave me Lady Macbeth, all the big roles," she recalled in a video

[See **Morgan,** E3]

A tragic tale turns into a slog

The wheels of justice, and its story, grind slowly in Peacock's new "Lockerbie" miniseries. Review, **E3**

Comics **E4-5**
Puzzles **E5**

A Chicano maestro's work speaks volumes

Allen J. Schaben Los Angeles Times

BETO DE LA ROCHA works on a painting of sister Carola's two dogs, Luna and Miel, in September. Musician-son Zack compares his style to jazz icon Coltrane's.

Los Four's Beto de la Rocha, still painting at 85, recalls a landmark show with pride.

By Nathan Solis

Beto de la Rocha doesn't notice the hummingbird darting around his head.

Seated on his sister's patio in El Sereno, the 85-year-old artist only wants to focus on his latest painting in front of him — even as the bird sings to him.

"I'm having some difficulty," he says with a frown, holding a paint brush and somewhat bothered trying to explain his craft. "I don't know how to ... explain it."

Instead, he describes chasing after crawdads along the L.A. River as a boy. He's lost in thought, seemingly unaware of the world around him, and he goes back to the painting.

It's long been hard for others to imagine him painting anything that could be put into words. His still-life "La Mesa de Frank," which appeared in a landmark 1974 exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, practically quivers like an animated GIF, vibrating on a different frequency from that of reality. The black-and-white drawing depicts a kitchen table surrounded by the words "Chicano art" and other floating text amid a frenzy of mugs that seem to tip over but never fall, a bag of coffee, utensils, crockery

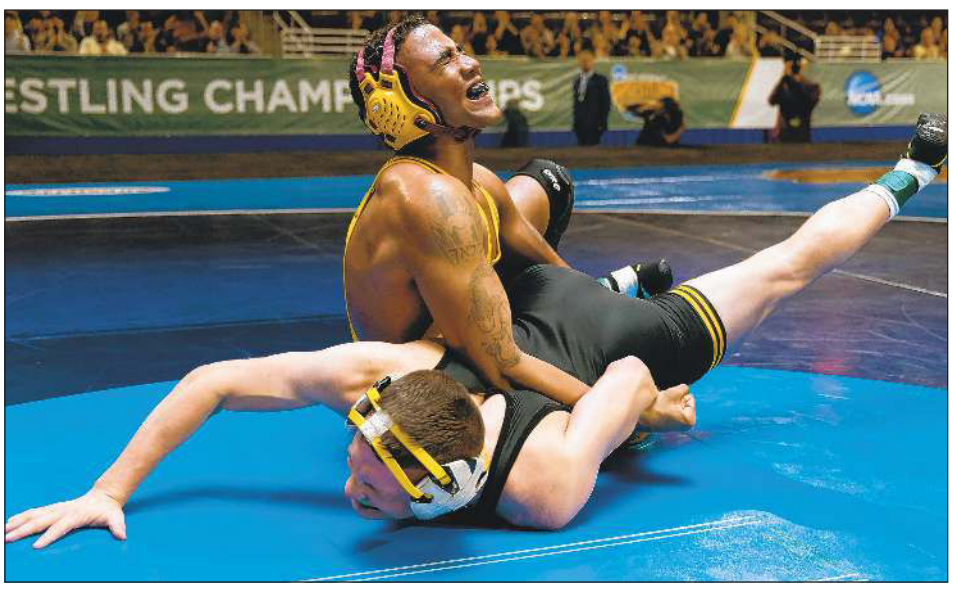
[See **Artist,** E6]

‘Unstoppable’ duo celebrate bond

[**‘Unstoppable,’** from E1] feel fortunate to celebrate the profound bond between Anthony and Judy. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Photographs by ANA CARBALLOSA Prime Video

JENNIFER Lopez calls the relationship between her character and her son, played by Jharrel Jerome, “the heart and soul of the movie.”



JEROME calls the real-life Anthony Robles, a wrestling champion born with one leg, an “incredibly brutal wrestler.” Jerome plays him in “Unstoppable,” above.

“Unstoppable” is a film about perseverance and strength and overcoming adversity. Anthony and Judy are really the bleeding heart of this film. They’re not just mother and son. They’re each other’s protectors. They’ve really grown up with each other. And for a long time, it was just the two of them. Jennifer, what it was like cultivating that bond with Jharrel?

Lopez: The main thing was exactly that — that their relationship was going to be, like you say, the heart and soul of the movie. When Jharrel and I met for the first time, he came over to my house with [William Goldenberg], the director, and we talked. I had my script and I had all my notes and I had all the scenes broken down and everything.

But the one thing I wanted was to connect with him on like, “I’m your person; I’m your mother. I need to be able to treat you like my son, like how I treat my own son — very affectionate, very loving, looking in your eyes.” But they also had a different kind of relationship, maybe even than I had with my own children, because they were alone right away. ... He was born without a leg and she was 16 years old. And so they were kind of like children together and they grew up together. So they even had more of a special bond in that way.

How was that for you, Jharrel? I don’t want to sound like a creeper, but I’ve seen your own mother’s Instagram page for you, and that woman loves you.

Lopez: She has a page?

Jerome: It’s a specific page dedicated to being the mother of Jharrel Jerome. She did that three years ago. It’s sweet, but she’s clout chasing. She looks at her phone and she’s like, “Look, I got new followers...” I’m like, “Mom, *shush*.”

But you know what that bond is like. So how was that for you on your side of things?

Jerome: Incredible. I use a lot of my relationship that I have with my mother in this film with Jen. Like Jen said, that was the big conversation we had in the beginning, is how close should we be and how comfortable will we allow ourselves to get? And once we agreed that it was about getting past that comfort zone and just going full in, I just pulled from the proud mama’s boy in me.

Lopez: Because once you meet Anthony and Judy, you see it. And you see it more from Anthony, because he really credits his mom for the person that he is and he calls her his hero. That was something that we had to really show.

Jerome: It’s the sweetest parallel to my life. Anthony and I are very similar in that way because without my mom, I wouldn’t be here at all. She had me at a very young age too, in the Bronx, alone, as well. So Anthony and I bonded over that, actually. It was almost unspoken. We didn’t have to speak on how close we were to our moms and how important they were. It was just a known energy. Guys can feel that too. You can meet another guy and it’s like, “You’re a softy. You love your mom too?”

I want to talk more about the relationship that you developed with Anthony and Judy. Jharrel, let’s start with you. What was important for you to sort of mine from him? You met with him before COVID. What did you want to suss out from those interactions?

Jerome: His kindness. This guy is the nicest guy you’ll ever meet. And I don’t say that lightly. He’s truly so charming. He lights up every room. His smile is so wide. And he’s an incredibly brutal wrestler. He’s dominant on the mat. He’s monstrous on the mat. So what I wanted to suss out was that balance that he has — who he is on the mat versus who he is off the mat. And when I got to spend time with him in his home, with his wife and his child, his mother, his family, that’s when I started to realize: Wrestling is the most important thing in his heart, but it’s the last thing that makes him *him*, as well as his disability. These things don’t make him him. It’s the heart that he has and the fact that he is the nicest guy. I wanted to make sure the world felt that when they saw that and when they saw the performance.

There’s a scene in the film where Judy shares the story of Anthony’s birth. Jennifer, that really came from you establishing a trust with Judy where she felt comfortable sharing difficult moments. You’re someone that knows what it’s like to be in the public eye, what it’s like to be judged and having that caution of how much you want to share. How did that guide or shape your discussions with Judy — “I think it’s important to go here” and “This is what we’re going to do” — knowing when to push for a scene like that?

Lopez: If you’re going to expose yourself like that, you’re going to be talked about. But I wanted her to trust me with my experience with *that*, to know what was right for telling her story in the best way and telling Anthony’s story in the best way.

In telling Anthony’s story, you have to understand the relationship with him and Judy. And you have to understand Judy. Because that contributed to who Anthony became and who he is today. I really wanted her to just feel comfortable and trust me. And I told her things and she told me things. And we really identified with each other on a lot of different experiences. To her credit, she was very brave. She opened up. She told me things that I was able to add to the script — when I tell him that he’s unstoppable. She shares with him a story from when he was 1 year old that was straight from Judy’s mouth to me. And I wrote it down and I was like, “This is really important.” Carrying the burden of, “This was my fault. You are like this because of me. And it’s my fault that you had a tough childhood. And it’s my fault that you had this stepfather.” And even though the kid doesn’t think that, you carry that with you.

And it was important for her to take that responsibility in her growing up and becoming an adult who believed that she was worthy of something because *he* had become something. He was becoming something that was so inspirational to so many people, and it changed her. It changed her life. And the love and the care that she poured into him and the belief that he could do anything, he wound up kind of bringing that all the way back to her.

That’s a lot to be trusted with.

Lopez: It was picking and choosing the things — not things where, “Oh, this could be dramatic!” No, it was things that help tell the story and help you understand their trajectory. And for it to be triumphant, for it to be inspirational, you have to talk about the difficult times. That’s what makes it so triumphant, that they had to overcome certain things, both of them. She was very, very integral in helping me form her character.

Jharrel, I want to talk about the physicality of this performance. It’s always a process for any character to sort of figure out how they move and things like that, but believably capturing how someone’s center of gravity is maybe shifted because they have one leg like seems like quite the mental undertaking. Talk to me about what that was like for you, the prep work that you went into to figure out how Anthony moves in the world.

Jerome: Practice makes perfect. I trained for 7 ½ months or so with Anthony, five days a week. That was the most helpful experience ever. At first, the pressure was there, but then it just turned into endless information. In terms of the wrestling, Anthony has a very specific style. There’s one way to learn wrestling, it’s another [thing] to learn Anthony Robles’ wrestling. And, so, to actually have him there, get on the ground with me, get on the mat, get me used to gliding on my knee and on my fists and on my hands, getting used to getting slammed — that was the trick in this whole thing. It wasn’t necessarily *learning* wrestling, but it was learning the confidence of a wrestler and learning the confidence of Anthony Robles. There were many times in the early stages of rehearsing and learning wrestling where I would get picked up and I’m like, “Wait ... no, no.” I didn’t want to get slammed down. By the time we got to set, it was like —

Lopez: “Don’t slam me!”

Jerome: Seriously, like, I’m an actor. [*Laughs*] But then I realized that the essence of who he is would be completely gone if I didn’t have at least an ounce of the confidence that he carries.

Lopez: To know what it felt like.

Jerome: The feeling of being in the air and just knowing, all right, you’re going to hit the ground. And these wrestlers, they do it for a living. You have to trust the safety in the sport and trust the other wrestlers that you’re wrestling with. And once that happened, and I’m flying in the air, landing on the ground and popping back up, I’m like, “Oh, yeah, I’m Anthony.”

The other inspirational tale out of this film, you see the arc of this woman growing self-esteem and getting reacquainted with herself after it felt like everything was crumbling down. Jennifer, you started the journey of Judy at a different point in your life than you are now. How did playing her shape or change your outlook in terms of what you feel like you’re capable of overcoming or what you want out of this next chapter for yourself?

Lopez: You’re right, I was in a different place than I am today. And it’s actually really a beautiful thing because in playing Judy, I understood a lot of the dynamics that she had gone through and even more of the personal stuff that we didn’t even share in the movie, but [we did] with each other — I was able to privately use it. And for me, those things are very healing. You play these certain characters and something happens to you. If you’re really able to heal a part of yourself, it’s why you’re drawn to certain projects. There’s all these projects that you can do and it’s, like, “Which ones do I do?” What happens is, it’s not coincidental; it’s the ones that are exactly the ones that you need at the moment to go to your next level of who you are. And so it’s not surprising that I am where I am today, which is a very different place than I was a year ago.

Jharrel, are you still keeping up with wrestling? Were you watching the Olympics thinking, “I know what you guys are going through?” Has it stayed in your life?

Lopez: You’re like, “I could get that. I could win the gold.”

Jerome: Actually doing the sport and getting on the mat and getting on the ground, I have not done. But the mentality has not left me.

Lopez: You have more of an athlete’s mentality. When I heard you talking earlier, I thought to myself, it was like when I played Selena [Quintanilla]. I was a dancer at the time. I hadn’t made a record yet, and I just was approaching it from like this other place, as an actor and a dancer. And then I was like, “She’s a *singer*.” It’s like you. It’s like all of a sudden you were like, “He’s an athlete. I have to be an athlete.”

Jerome: Yeah, I have to think like an athlete and move like an athlete. That doesn’t leave you.

Lopez: If you’re not an athlete, it’s a new thing.

Jerome: Yeah. I learned a lot in the gym. I learned a lot about what my body could do, what I’m physically capable of. And once you learn that and teach yourself that, it almost becomes a habit and lifestyle.

So now I’m like — I’m not picking people to wrestle to the ground right now, but my work ethic and my fitness, everything. Skin glowing? It’s the gym. Teeth good? That’s the gym. Fit is nice? That’s the gym. It’s not me. It’s the gym.

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MONICA 1332 Second Street Santa Monica
FROM GROUND ZERO 1:20 4:10 7:10
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN R 1:00 4:00 7:00
BABYGIRL R 1:30 4:20 7:20
LOS FRIKIS R 1:10 4:00 7:00
THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG PG-13 1:00 6:50
ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT 4:10 PM
A REAL PAIN R 1:10 4:30 7:30

TOWN CENTER 17200 Ventura Blvd. Encino
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN R 1:10 4:15 7:20
BABYGIRL R 1:20 4:10 7:30
THE FIRE INSIDE PG-13 4:00 PM
THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO 1:00 6:50
THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG PG-13 1:00 7:00
A REAL PAIN R 1:30 4:40 7:10

NEWHALL 22500 Lyons Ave. Santa Clarita
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN R 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00
BABYGIRL R 1:30 4:20 7:30 10:10
NOSFERATU R 1:10 4:10 7:10 10:15
MUFASA: THE LION KING PG 1:10 4:00 7:10 10:00
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 PG 1:20 4:20 7:20 10:10
MOANA 2 PG 1:20 4:30 7:20 10:15
WICKED PG 1:00 3:50 7:00 9:50

NoHo 7 5240 Lankershim Blvd. No. Hollywood
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN R 12:50 4:00 7:10
BABYGIRL R 1:15 4:20 7:30
NOSFERATU R 1:10 4:10 7:20
THE FIRE INSIDE PG-13 4:15 PM
LOS FRIKIS R 1:20 4:10 7:10
THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO 12:50 6:50
FLOW PG 4:35 PM
WICKED PG 12:55 4:00 7:00
ANORA R 1:00 7:00

GLENDALE 207 N. Maryland Ave Glendale
FROM GROUND ZERO 1:30 4:20 7:20
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN R 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:55
BABYGIRL R 1:20 4:10 7:10 10:10
NOSFERATU R 1:10 4:10 7:10 10:10
FLOW PG 10:15 PM
THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG PG-13 12:50 6:50
WHEN IT RAINS IN L.A. R 4:30 10:15

CLAREMONT 450 W. 2nd Street Claremont
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN R 12:50 4:00 7:00 10:00
BABYGIRL R 1:30 4:30 7:30 10:15
NOSFERATU R 1:00 4:10 7:10 10:00
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TELEVISION REVIEW

Lockerbie miniseries gives in to the grind

Five-hour telling turns tedious in the story of a father's quest after the 1988 bombing.

ROBERT LLOYD
TELEVISION CRITIC

On Dec. 21, 1988, a bomb exploded on Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, traveling from London to New York, breaking it apart and sending it to Earth. Flora Swire, a 23-year-old Englishwoman, was among the 270 killed (including 11 on the ground). Her father, physician Jim Swire, became a spokesperson for families pressing for an investigation and later an advocate for investigating the investigation. In 2021, he published a book, co-written with Peter Biddulph, "The Lockerbie Bombing: A Father's Search for Justice," which has now become a five-part Peacock miniseries, the less personally titled "Lockerbie: A Search for Truth," in which he is played by Colin Firth.

That search has gone on for more than 30 years, in fits and starts, with imperfect resolution, but apart from the question of whether Swire has used his time well — which his screen double will have cause to question — there is the less complicated question of whether a five-hour miniseries can support a viewer's interest in his quest.

The first episode, in which the Swire family sends Flora (Rosanna Adams) off to her fatal flight, is heart-stopping, first because we know what's coming and second because the crash, as experienced from the ground as the plane comes down in pieces, is well-realized and terrifying. So is the drama of panicked parents searching for information — which is maddeningly slow in coming — and then for bodies. But before long, we are confronted with a long parade of expository scenes in which Swire and an interested journalist (Sam Troughton) trade not always good, usually second-hand information; indeed, apart from Swire's emotion-heavy, information-light scenes with his wife, Jane (Catherine McCormack), much of the rest of the series consists of characters catching one another up on the news.

Although Swire will do a good bit of traveling — to Scotland and the U.S., to Libya, where he will twice meet Moammar Kadafi (Nabil Al Raee), and the Netherlands, where a trial will eventually take place — there is very little in the latter four episodes that could be described as action.

GRAEME HUNTER SKY/Carnival

JEMMA CARLTON, left, Harry Redding, Colin Firth, Catherine McCormack as the family of Pan Am 103 victim Flora Swire in "Lockerbie: A Search for Truth."

As a story of the wheels of justice, or injustice, grinding slowly, it does grind slowly. Time marches on, decades passing as actors age with new hair and makeup, through 9/11 and the war on terror, to Wikileaks and the war on secrecy. Contemporary news clips make one want to find a documentary on the subject — of which there have been many, including the 2023 BAFTA-winning docuseries "Lockerbie," in which Swire also figures — or "read further," as the phrase goes. (Another Lockerbie docudrama, should you care to continue down this road, is coming from Netflix later this year.) Like many historical dramas based on a participant's point of view, it shapes itself to his theory of the case, with controversial situations and characters presented accordingly. You are set up to buy Swire's version, as it evolves, however many other people don't.

By the same token "A Search for Truth" never becomes the conspiracy thriller it suggests lurks beneath the public record, restricted as it is by history. It has possibilities as the story of an unlikely relationship, between Swire and accused bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi (Ardalan Esmaili), but as a domestic drama, it's one-note — or rather two-note, as Jane alternates between exasperation and support. The series pays no more attention to Swire's family than he seems to.

Firth is onscreen throughout, but because the story is fragmented, jumping ahead for years at a time, he lacks the space to create a full-blown character. (Others fare even less well.) Except for the beginning, before the bombing, and the very end, when a little enlightenment breaks in — a person he cares about having observed that death lasts a long time but life is for living — Firth is stuck acting modes of depression and agitation, which, however true to Swire's lived experience, becomes repetitious, tedious. Even his grief is smothered by his monomaniacal need for closure: "This is not about revenge," he will tell Kadafi, pinning a campaign button on his lapel. "The truth must be known." You may be less sure.

Music shaped Carter's career

[**Carter,** from E1]
House by raising money when I didn't have any money," Carter later recalled.

The former president, who died Sunday at 100, was a lifelong music fan, inspired and deeply moved by his era's rockers, gospel singers and country songwriters, who often returned the affection onstage and at the White House. His tastes in rock and pop music were a subtle but unmistakable gesture toward racial reconciliation and, as evidenced by his support of the National Endowment for the Arts later, a vision of a diverse and inclusive American culture.

Well before Kamala Harris was "Brat" and Barack Obama was a Spotify tastemaker, Carter, was, as one documentary labeled him, America's first "Rock & Roll President."

Carter grew up with gospel music in the church, telling the Washington Post that it was "not a racial music ... it's a music of pain, of longing, of searching, of hope, and of faith." His reputation as a president conversant in rocker counterculture, though, was noticed by the era's preeminent gonzo journalist, Hunter S. Thompson.

Thompson was on assignment for Rolling Stone to cover Ted Kennedy's nascent presidential campaign in 1974 but caught Carter giving "a king hell bastard of a speech," and "by the time it was over he had rung every bell in the room," as Thompson wrote.

Although it seems at odds with his devout, peanut-farming reputation, Carter's countercultural credibility helped build the coalition that won him the White House. In 1976, as he accepted the Democratic Party's nomination for the presidency, America was coming out of a contentious and mistrustful era of Watergate and the Vietnam War. Carter took the occasion to quote his beloved Dylan in search of hope and optimism.

"My vision of this nation and its future has been deepened and matured during the 19 months that I've campaigned among you for president. I've never had more faith in America than I do today," Carter said. "We have an America that, in Bob Dylan's phrase, is 'busy being born,' not 'busy dying.' "

Carter was fond of quoting Dylan. He'd said in a 1974 speech: "After listening to his records about 'The Ballad of Hattie Carroll' and 'Like a Rolling Stone' and 'The Times, They Are a-Changing,' I've learned to appreciate the dynamism of change in a modern society." Years later, Carter introduced the singer at MusiCares' Person of the Year ceremony in 2015.

RICK DIAMOND Getty Images

JIMMY CARTER, right, and Rosalynn Carter join Willie Nelson onstage in Atlanta in 1982. Nelson also performed in the Rose Garden of the White House.

Dylan was one of many musicians who came to trust in Carter's tastes and moral compass.

The Band covered "Georgia on My Mind" on "Saturday Night Live" in support of Carter just before the 1976 election and later released a studio version. At an event for Carter's inauguration in 1977, Aretha Franklin sang "God Bless America." While at the inaugural concert, Paul Simon said onstage, "Perhaps a time of righteousness and dignity may be upon us," and David Crosby told Rolling Stone that Carter was "so intelligent that he knows how to be human and accessible and real. It's sheer genius." Even the right-wing singer-musician Charlie Daniels in 2014 called Carter "a good man. ... He brought some credibility back to the office of the presidency."

In 1978, Carter hosted a star-packed jazz concert on the South Lawn of the White House, where he hopped onstage with Dizzy Gillespie and drummer Max Roach for the famous two-word chorus of "Salt Peanuts."

Carter loved jazz and touted the pioneering free-jazz pianist Cecil Taylor in interviews. For a former Georgia governor just a few years removed from the heat of the civil rights era, it was a significant gesture of solidarity and respect for a defining Black art form.

Perhaps most famously — if apocryphally — in 1980, after performing for Carter in the Rose Garden, Willie Nelson claimed he sparked a joint while sitting on the roof of the White House. In his autobiography, Nelson wrote, "Sitting on the roof of the White House in Washington, D.C., late at night with a beer in one hand and a fat Austin Torpedo in the other, I drifted into a reflective mood. Nobody from the Secret Service was watching us — or if they were, it was with the intention of keeping us out of trouble instead of getting us into it."

(Nelson clarified that Carter was not present for this, as it was Carter's son Chip up on the roof with Nelson that night.)

In the 2020 documentary "Rock & Roll President," which also featured interviews with Nelson, Jimmy Buffett and Bono, Dylan said that Carter was "a simple kind of man, like in the Lynyrd Skynyrd song. He takes his time, doesn't live too fast. Troubles come, but they will pass. Find the woman, and find love, and don't forget there's always someone above. There's many sides to him. He's a nuclear engineer. Woodworking carpenter. He's also a poet. He's a dirt farmer. If you told me he was a race car driver, I wouldn't even be surprised."

On news of his death, many musicians wrote heartfelt tributes to Carter.

"President Jimmy Carter was a truly extraordinary man and a rare politician who always stood up and spoke out for idealism, compassion and human rights and particularly for the rights of women and those who suffered real oppression," wrote singer-songwriter Peter Gabriel, a longtime friend who respected Carter's peace advocacy, particularly his 2006 book "Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid."

"Rest easy, Mr President. I'm sad for us, and happy for you. Your and Mrs. Rosalynn's legacy of love will live forever," wrote country singer Trisha Yearwood, who with her husband, Garth Brooks, worked on the 2024 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project with the housing charity Habitat for Humanity.

Heart singer-guitarist Nancy Wilson called Carter "an incredible bridge between policy and our humanity," and Georgia rapper Killer Mike and political activist wrote on social media, "I am honored to say I have known a 'Good Man' who truly made a difference in a wicked world."

Carter may yet earn one last piece of music history. Come Feb. 2, he's up for his fourth Grammy win, for audio book, narration, and storytelling recording, for "Last Sundays in Plains: A Centennial Celebration."

Playing the fool suits her

[**Morgan,** from E1]
chat from her London home. "All these lovely, beautiful girls who wanted to play the ingenues — they hated me because they were like, 'Why is she getting these parts? She wants to be the stupid maid.' "

Several decades later, Morgan's commitment to playing the fool has paid off. Since 2013, she has starred as Philomena Cunk, a know-nothing TV pundit, in a series of mockumentaries about history, philosophy, art and science. As she strides through picturesque locations, dressed in tweed, and sits down with distinguished experts from the world of academia, she looks every bit the part of a BBC presenter. Then she does things like ask an Oxford professor, "What was more culturally significant, Beyoncé's hit 'Single Ladies' or the Renaissance period?" and the illusion of gravitas is (hilariously) ruptured.

The latest volume in the "Cunk" canon, "Cunk on Life," premiered Thursday on Netflix. Cunk remains as deadpan and ill-informed as ever, asking great philosophers and physicists "some of the most significant questions you can ask with a mouth." In one particularly absurd scene, she tells a renowned British surgeon that only 40% of people have skeletons. Everyone else, she says, is "solid meat."

Morgan has a remarkable ability to maintain a straight face throughout these interviews. It's all about the pressure, she says. "I know that as soon as I laugh, it's not funny." She admits she does "corpse" — or crack up — on occasion, particularly with certain experts, like Douglas Hedley, a professor of the philosophy of religion at Cambridge University who has become a recurring talking head in the "Cunk" universe. "He talks very slowly, but he's brilliant. I think the straighter and more serious they are, the more it tickles me," she says.

The academics who appear in "Cunk" may be aware that Morgan is doing a bit for a comedy program, but they still react to her character's idiotic questions with genuine shock and exasperation. In the early days, before Cunk became well-known, there was more confusion.

"We had some real eggheads, and famously, they don't watch comedy. Then you trample all over their favorite topic" and things can get tense, she says. One expert grew so irritated they had to pause filming while he calmed down. "I said, 'Don't stop if that happens again.' I was willing for him to punch me, because I thought it would make great TV. If he breaks my nose, it'll heal."

"I think they genuinely feel a bit defensive of their subject matter," says "Cunk on Life" creator Charlie Brooker, who is also the force behind the techno-dystopian anthology series "Black Mirror." He usually is not physically present when Morgan is filming interviews because, he says, "I find it too cringe. I would die."

Morgan "doesn't mind an awkward silence," he says, "which comes in really handy when she's doing the interviews, because sometimes they will last an hour, 70% of which is awkward silence."

The experts, some of whom have become recurring favorites, "seem to really enjoy the fact that they're there," Brooker says. "The sad thing is, experts don't get interviewed on mainstream TV very often anymore."

Over time, Cunk has grown more antagonistic toward the talking heads she interrogates, and more willing to counter their arguments with dubious anecdotal evidence. ("My mate Paul" is one of her most frequently cited sources.)

"That feels like a modern-day thing," Brooker says. "People are less shy these days about saying to an expert, 'Yeah, whatever, you may have studied this subject for 25 years, but I just watched a video on YouTube which tells me your life's work is bulls—. I'll tell you why we didn't land on the moon, or vaccines don't work. There's an arrogant swagger to a lot of the alternative-truth crowd.

"There's something funny about watching her attack their professions, things they care passionately about, from her position of slightly bored detachment," he adds.

Morgan's Bolton accent somehow adds to the character's dry comedic affect. When Morgan was studying at the East 15 Acting School, she was told the way she spoke would be an obstacle to getting work.

"It's madness, because every part I've had since then, it's the accent that's got it," she says. "In drama school, they always want to stamp out the interesting bits about you and build you back up into an actor that they think people want. But actually, people want weirdness. They want individuality, don't they? They want humps and lumps and weird eyes."

Morgan spent nearly 10 years performing stand-up in London, which she found at least as valuable as drama school. "You learn a lot very quickly about how not to bore people," she says.

During those lean years, she made ends meet by working a string of miserable jobs. There was a stint as a telemarketer, cold-calling people to ask if they needed a new accountant, and a particularly grim gig packing worming tablets for dogs for 10 hours a day, with no talking or sitting allowed. "It was the worst experience, but it made me think, 'I've really got to make this work. I've really got to pull my socks up and do something with my life, because I don't want to end up here,' " Morgan says.

She had landed a few small parts in TV when she got the audition for Philomena Cunk, which originated as a character on the satirical news show "Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe." Comedian Al Campbell played a dim-witted commentator with the ludicrous name Barry Shitpeas. The show was looking for his female counterpart, originally envisioned as "a yummy mummy cupcake blogger who's vacuous and drives a Range Rover," Brooker says.

To complete the stereotype, the character was supposed to sound more posh. But Morgan insisted on asking for additional time in her audition to play Cunk in her own voice. "I'd never had the balls to do that," she says. "It was just funnier, because my own accent is quite flat, and it lends a sort of misery to everything."

Brooker was "absolutely floored" by the audition. Morgan brings "an odd comic unknowability" to Cunk, he says. "There's something very curious about the character, where she is sort of alien and otherworldly but simultaneously vapid in a cosmic way,"

"Everyone was quite nervous about it — would this new character work or not?" Morgan recalls. "If it hadn't, I'd have been axed immediately and taken off and shot around the corner. But it worked."

Cunk became a breakout character, appearing in recurring segments and then anchoring standalone specials, including "Cunk on Britain" and — yes — "Cunk on Shakespeare." (Standout quote: "School in Shakespeare's day and age was vastly different to our own. In fact, it was far easier because he didn't have to study Shakespeare.")

Meanwhile, Morgan became a reliable scene stealer in acerbic British comedies, often playing bluntly profane characters with little regard for social niceties. In the Ricky Gervais vehicle "After Life," she starred as a newspaper employee obsessed with Kevin Hart's oeuvre. In "Motherland," a sitcom co-created by Sharon Horgan, she played a foul-mouthed single mom who chafes at the bourgeois parenting standards of her middle-class social orbit. (She lets her son pee in the street and makes sandwiches by hacking cheese from a hunk in her freezer, severing a finger in the process.)

"It's nice to have someone like that, who just doesn't give a toss," she says of her "Motherland" role. "I used to get moms running up to me in the street every day: 'Thank God for this. I thought I was the only one.' "

She also wrote, directed and starred in the defiantly weird comedy "Mandy," which follows an unemployable woman as she skips from one odd job to the next.

Morgan does sometimes think it would be nice to do something a bit grittier and more dramatic. "But I've still got no interest in Shakespeare."

COMICS

LA CUCARACHA By Lalo Alcaraz

So, I spoke with the manager...
He said if I behave and do everything they say, all should be fine.
But that I should be ready to go back to where I came from at a moment's notice.
BROWN BABY NEW YEAR Female

CRABGRASS By Tauhid Bondia

ZAP!
WHOA!
WE'RE BACK!
AND I THINK SANTA SENT US TO JUST WHEN WE LEFT!
COOOLL...
THAT MEANS WE DIDN'T MISS THANKSGIVING!
GOOD! SAVING CHRISTMAS BUILDS AN APPETITE!

CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell

THAT'S THE LAST TIME I DATE SOMEONE YOUNGER THAN ME.
OUR GENERATION KNOWS HOW TO HAVE FUN. THEIR GENERATION JUDGES EVERYTHING.
WELL, THEY GREW UP ONLINE. THEY SPENT THEIR FORMATIVE YEARS HAVING TO FIGURE OUT IF THE PEOPLE TALKING TO THEM WERE ACTUAL HUMAN BEINGS, OR BOTS.
WAIT... ARE YOU ABOUT TO TRY FOR THE FIFTIETH TIME TO GET ME TO WATCH BATTLESTAR GALACTICA?
ONLY IF YOU WANT ANY INSIGHT INTO THE MODERN MIND.

LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis

MY FRIEND JUST TEXTED TO SAY HIS ELDERLY MOTHER PASSED AWAY.
REALLY?
YEAH, SO I SENT HIM ONE OF THOSE PRAYER EMOJIS. YOU KNOW, THE ONE WITH THE TWO HANDS PRESSED TOGETHER?
THAT'S NOT A PRAYER EMOJI. THOSE ARE TWO PEOPLE HIGH-FIVING.
I JUST HIGH-FIVED THE DEATH OF HIS MOTHER.
JUST TELL HIM YOU'RE COLD AND UNCARING.

LIO By Mark Tatulli

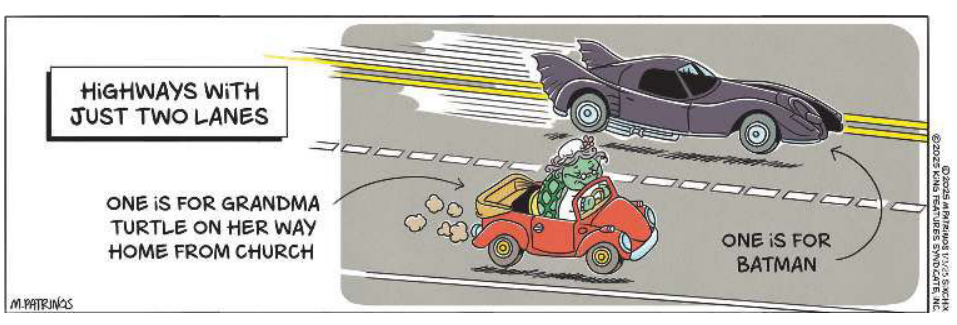
ZITS By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

MY DAD DOESN'T WANT TO USE OUR MUSIC FOR HIS OFFICE M.O.H.*
DANG!
*MUSIC ON HOLD
HE'S STICKING WITH THE NEIL DIAMOND-Y, FLEETWOOD MAC-Y STUFF HE HAS.
MAYBE WE'RE JUST AHEAD OF OUR TIME.
I THOUGHT THE HAWAIIAN DEATH METAL VIBE WAS WORKING!

TUNDRA By Chad Carpenter

TELL YA WHAT, KID. YOU QUIT KICKING YOUR DIRTY UNDERWEAR UNDER THE BED AND I'LL MIND MY OWN BUSINESS DOWN HERE.
www.tundracomics.com

SIX CHIX By Maritsa Patrinos



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett

DOES IT BUG YOU WHEN THE GYM GETS CROWDED?
IF I'M INSIDE RUNNING ON A TREADMILL, SOMETHING HAS ALREADY GONE WRONG.
LIKE WHAT?
LIKE IF I'M COMING BACK FROM AN INJURY.
BECAUSE YOU WERE RUNNING ON ICE WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN RUNNING ON A TREAD-MILL.
WHY ARE WE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION WHEN YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW IT TURNS OUT?

NON SEQUITUR By Wiley

...SO AFTER SOME DISCUSSION, IT WAS DECIDED ANY COMMANDMENT AFTER "THOU SHALT STAY BELOW ZERO DEGREES CELSIUS" SEEMED KINDA MOOT
FROSTY THE PROPHET

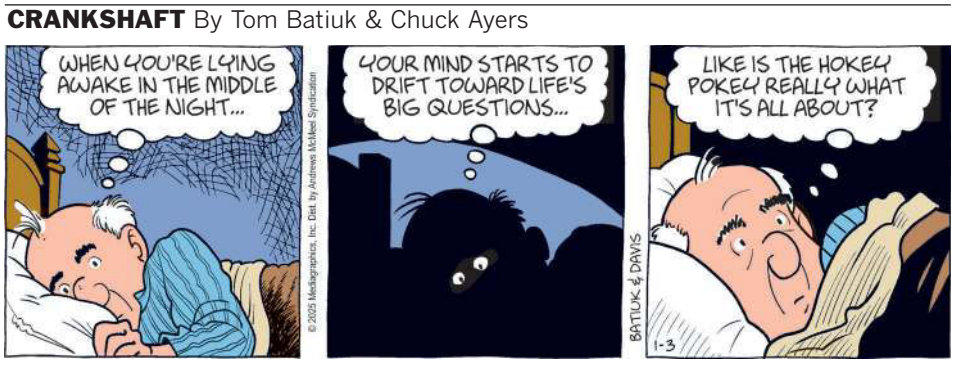
PICKLES By Brian Crane

WHY ARE YOU DOWN IN THE DUMPS?
NO GOOD REASON.
IT'S ME, ISN'T IT?
YOU'RE UPSET BECAUSE I BROKE YOUR MOTHER'S SPITTOON.
YOU WHAT?!
AND IT WASN'T A SPITTOON!!

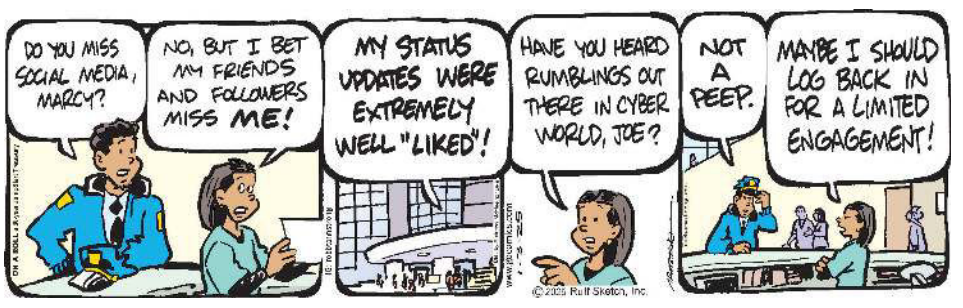
BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman

HAMMIE, DON'T FORGET YOUR JACKET.
AW!
DOES IRON MAN WEAR A JACKET? DOES CAPTAIN AMERICA WEAR A JACKET?
SHE SAID ONCE I CAN FLY, WE'LL TALK.
STOP

CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers


WHEN YOU'RE LYING AWAKE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...
YOUR MIND STARTS TO DRIFT TOWARD LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS...
LIKE IS THE HOKEY POKEY REALLY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?

JUMP START By Robb Armstrong


DO YOU MISS SOCIAL MEDIA, MARCY?
NO, BUT I BET MY FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS MISS ME!
MY STATUS UPDATES WERE EXTREMELY WELL "LIKED"!
HAVE YOU HEARD RUMBLINGS OUT THERE IN CYBER WORLD, JOE?
NOT A PEEP.
MAYBE I SHOULD LOG BACK IN FOR A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT!

MACANUDO By Liniers

BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall

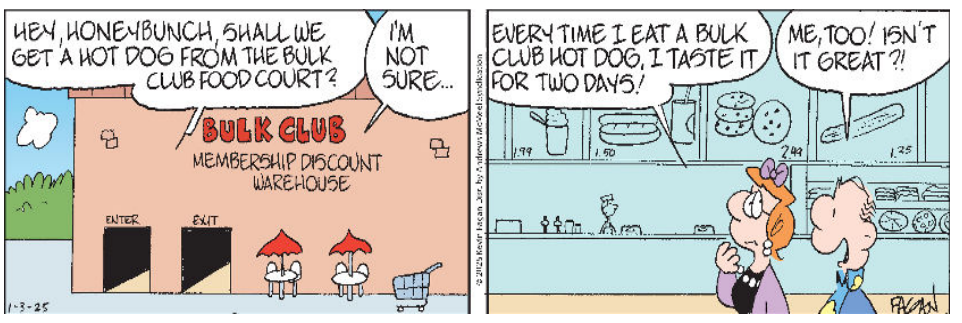
SO, WHAT DID YOU DO ON YOUR DAYS OFF, MAYA?
OH, A LOT!
ALTHOUGH IT'D PROBABLY BORE YOU IF I TOLD YOU
WHY'S THAT?
BECAUSE IT MOSTLY INVOLVED WATCHING TV, EATING AND NAPPING
YOU AND MY HUSBAND WOULD GET ALONG!

BETWEEN FRIENDS By Sandra Bell-Lundy

DID YOU MAKE ANY RESOLUTIONS?
I'M GOING TO BE KINDER TO MYSELF
I'M GOING TO STOP ALL THE NEGATIVE MENTAL CHATTER AND STOP RUMINATING OVER THINGS I CAN'T CHANGE
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
KIND OF THE SAME
I'M GOING TO STOP FOLLOWING THE NEWS

BIZARRO By Wayno and Piraro

DRABBLE By Kevin Fagan


HEY, HONEYBUNCH, SHALL WE GET A HOT DOG FROM THE BULK CLUB FOOD COURT?
I'M NOT SURE...
BULK CLUB
MEMBERSHIP DISCOUNT WAREHOUSE
ENTER
EXIT
EVERY TIME I EAT A BULK CLUB HOT DOG, I TASTE IT FOR TWO DAYS!
ME, TOO! ISN'T IT GREAT?!

MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell

BRRRR, IT LOOKS LIKE A BLIZZARD!
DON'T WORRY, MILLIE, WE'RE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING
LITTLE PINK THERMAL SOCK
LITTLE PINK THERMAL SOCK
mutts.com

PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz

LISTEN, BEAUTIFUL, GET YOUR STUPID FIGURE SKATES OFF THE ICE! WE WANNA PLAY HOCKEY, SEE?
WE HAVE TEN HOCKEY STICKS HERE TELLING YOU TO "GET OFF THE ICE!"
OH, YEAH? COME ON AND TRY SOMETHING! ME AND MY COACH'LL TAKE YOU ALL ON!!
I THINK I'LL GO HOME.. I HAVE SOME CHAIN LETTERS TO WRITE...

COMICS

SUDOKU

5								7
	7	8			5		6	
6		3		7		5		2
8							1	
			7		8			
	3							4
2		6		4		3		1
	4		9			2	7	
3								8

Level: Diabolical

2			1		
					5
6			5	4	
					6
1					
		6			3

Level: Moderate

3	1	4	8	9	6	5	7	2
6	2	5	1	4	7	8	9	3
7	8	9	2	3	5	1	4	6
4	3	8	7	6	1	9	2	5
1	7	2	9	5	4	3	6	8
5	9	6	3	8	2	7	1	4
9	5	7	6	2	8	4	3	1
8	6	1	4	7	3	2	5	9
2	4	3	5	1	9	6	8	7

3	4	2	5	6	1
1	6	5	2	3	4
6	5	4	1	2	3
2	1	3	4	5	6
4	2	6	3	1	5
5	3	1	6	4	2

1/3/25

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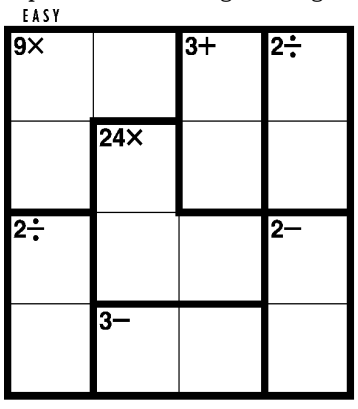
Solutions to Thursday's puzzles

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 or 2-by-3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 (or 1 to 6 for the smaller grid). For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit *www.sudoku.org.uk*.

KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6 puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares must combine to produce the target number found in the top left corner of the cage using the mathematical operation indicated. A number can be repeated within a cage as long as it is not in the same row or column.

EASY



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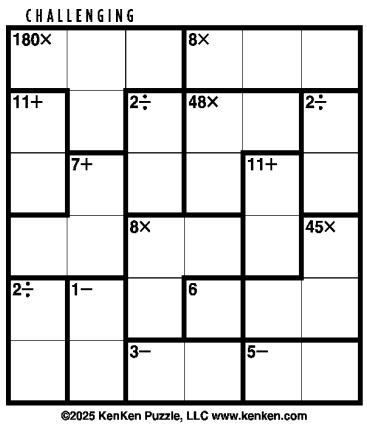
CHALLENGING



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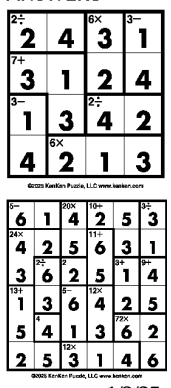
PREVIOUS ANSWERS



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1/3/25

HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis

Aries (March 21-April 19): It's not like you to keep tabs on every minor interaction, but today it will help you to have at least a general sense of the give and take.

Taurus (April 20-May 20): You don't align with every aspect of a group's philosophy, but there's enough value to justify your involvement. Contributing your service could yield connection and belonging.

Gemini (May 21-June 21): Challenging the status quo will invite resistance. Change takes time; don't expect overnight victories, but know the effort matters.

Cancer (June 22-July 22): No one enjoys making mistakes, let alone repeating them, but the more times you get it wrong, the sweeter success tastes when you finally get it right.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Your charisma will be amplified when you celebrate what's unique about others. Generosity of spirit is your calling card.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Whatever the project, a little extra research saves time and effort in the long run. Seeking advice is a natural opportunity to network.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): Not everyone has a mental filter that keeps thoughts inside their head. You'll be the one to step in gracefully and smooth things over.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): You'll intuitively grasp the flow of events around you, allowing you to make spot-on predictions. Stay tuned in.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): To want to connect is human. To make subtle assertions of your autonomy so as not to hurt the other person's feelings is divine.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): It will be exceptionally lucky to make a wish list and then expand it to include a bigger fantasy about the future than seems reasonable.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You can never have enough good friends, and there's no benefit to having any bad ones. Take advantage of your social stars and make connections today.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): Some requests made of you seem like a stretch. You don't owe anyone your time and attention.

Today's birthday (Jan. 3): You do happy things, and joy courses through your being. Your passion will inspire and your enthusiasm uplift others. Highlights: Professional or financial options once only dreamed of. You'll teach skills and open doors for another, providing life-changing opportunity and cementing a legacy. Libra and Leo adore you. Lucky numbers: 5, 12, 40, 7, 21.

Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol

By Zachary David Levy

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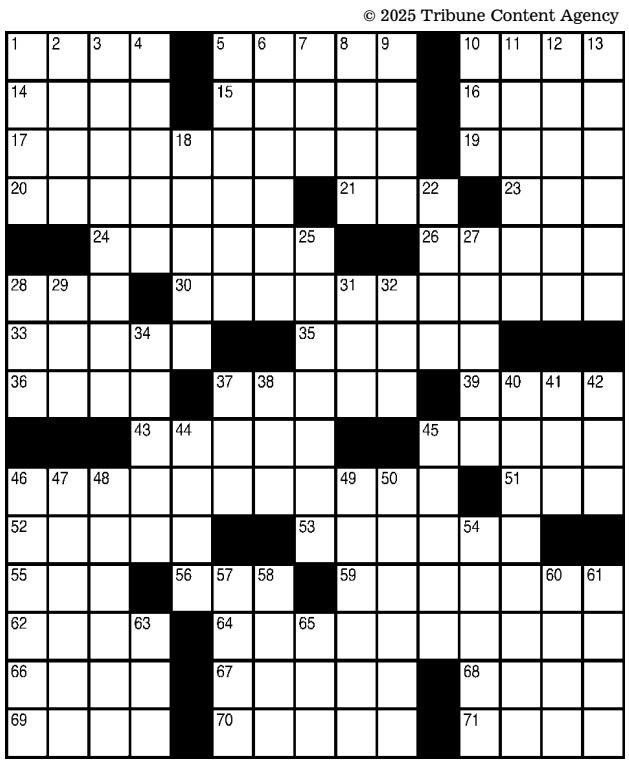


ACROSS

1 Spielberg thriller based on a Benchley novel
5 Large reference
10 Pal
14 Snack sometimes referred to as a sandwich
15 Bounded
16 Mata __
17 Therapist's questionnaire?
19 Homemade website?
20 Peaceful greetings
21 Wide body
23 Father's hermana
24 Sultanate on Borneo
26 Keeping in the loop
28 Loan fig.
30 Paper model of a wrinkly dog?
33 Smelling a rat, so to speak
35 Nursery refrain
36 Slowly go dark
37 Peak performance, and an apt title for this puzzle
39 Members of Gil Grissom's team, briefly
43 Bygone airline whose first flight was from Key West to Havana
45 Whisky name
46 Empty cup at Starbucks?
51 Moody genre
52 Daisy variety
53 "The Secret of Monkey Island" figure
55 Tinkering inits.
56 Captured
59 Helped a cause, say
62 Caffeine-rich nut
64 Celebration that involves rowdy games of Twister, facetiously?
66 Old Testament book
67 Trial site
68 Chapeau spot
69 403(b) IDs
70 Is really good, songwise
71 Cheek

DOWN

1 __ stick: incense
2 Floor plan measure
3 Brought up with excellent manners, say
4 To this point
5 Figure at a reunion dinner
6 More succinct
7 Head, to a Brit
8 Big lugs
9 Lid affliction
10 "Evita" narrator
11 Genteel gesture
12 Bearish
13 "The Karate Kid" mentor
18 Showing a bit of cheek
22 Palm berry
25 Aid for brainstorming
27 "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown" singer
28 ET from the planet Melmac
29 Pod filler
31 City-building game franchise
32 Bit of a giggle
34 Fulfill a debt
37 Little pest
38 128 oz.
40 Southern pitcherful
41 "Can confirm"
42 "Sold out" sign
44 Once again
45 Carter of country
46 Bar shelf assortment
47 Old saws
48 Sri Lanka, once
49 Get ready for guests, perhaps
50 Familiar devices
54 Bakery treats
57 "Well, duh!" shorthand
58 Holiday time
60 Grub
61 Highlights, e.g.
63 Donkey
65 Cheek swab molecule

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

A	U	D	I			T	R	A	P		N	A	T	S
S	N	I	P		S	H	I	N	E	R	O	C	H	O
T	U	S	H		T	A	N	T	R	A	R	A	I	N
I	M	C	O	M	I	N	G	I	M	C	O	M	I	N	G
			T	O	T					K	O	A		
		R	O	M	C	O	M	C	O	U	P	L	E	
A	L	E		S	H	A	K	E	U	P	S		L	A	P
L	I	A	R			T	A	L	C			S	I	R	E
A	F	R	O		R	H	Y	T	H	M		A	T	T	A
N	E	W	B	I	E					E	M	B	E	D	S
	C	H	I	M	C	H	I	M	C	H	E	R	E	E	
H	Y	E	N	A		A	W	A	Y		R	E	I	G	N
A	C	E		M	C	D	O	U	B	L	E		G	R	E
I	L	L			H	A	N	D	E	D			H	E	X
R	E	S			U	T	T	E	R	S			T	E	T

1/3/25

BRIDGE

By Frank Stewart

After all the adversity Unlucky Louie has faced in my club's penny game, he's become something of a fatalist: "If my ship ever came in, it would be a hardship."

Louie blames his poor results on bad luck despite all the evidence to the contrary. When he played at today's four spades, West led the jack of diamonds and a diamond to East's 10. Louie ruffed and wanted to ruff his heart loser in dummy: At Trick Two he led a low heart.

East won and led a high diamond, and Louie was in the soup. If he ruffed with the ace, he would lose two trumps; when he ruffed low, West overruffed with the 10, and East still got a trump trick. Down one.

"Another hardship case," Louie groaned. "I make the contract if West has three trumps."

Louie's approach was wrong. After he ruffs the second diamond, he takes the A-K of trumps. He ruffs a diamond, leads a club to dummy, ruffs a diamond and leads more clubs. The defense gets only East's high trump and a heart.

You hold: ♠ A 7 6 4 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ 6 ♣ K Q 10 6. You open one spade, your partner bids two clubs, you raise to three clubs and he tries 3NT. What do you say?

Answer: I would be reluctant to play at notrump. I would pass with K Q J 9 2, A 6, 7 6, K 10 6 5 — with semi-balanced pattern and a source of winners in spades — but on the actual hand, slam is possible. Bid five clubs or cue-bid four hearts. If partner has 8, K Q 5, A 8 7 3, A J 9 8 4, you make six clubs.

East dealer
Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
♠ K 5 3
♥ J 4
♦ Q 8 7 3
♣ A J 8 2

WEST
♠ J 10
♥ Q 8 7 5 2
♦ J 5
♣ 7 5 4 3

EAST
♠ Q 9 8
♥ K 10 9
♦ A K 10 9 4 2
♣ 9

SOUTH
♠ A 7 6 4 2
♥ A 6 3
♦ 6
♣ K Q 10 6

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1 ♦	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	4 ♠
All Pass			

Opening lead — ♦ J

Tribune Content Agency

ASKING ERIC

Dear Eric: I am a gay male and have been with my husband for many years now, married six of them. Every time an issue comes up, whether it's the landlord knocking on the door or someone else, he comes running to me to deal with it and I am fed up with it.

I deal with paying all the bills each month. I work full time just like my husband, and I have told him numerous times to be a man and start dealing with it, as I want a husband, not a wife. But he doesn't listen. It's exhausting. What can I do?

Tired Husband

Dear Husband: Let's first unpack the phrase "I want a husband, not a wife." I'm not trying to attack you; I just want to point something out that will, hopefully, help you. In the way that you used it, the phrase has sexist connotations because it strongly suggests that a woman in a marriage is helpless or needy or any of the negative traits you're seeing in your husband. That's not true. Anybody can be overly dependent on a partner, and anybody can step up.

This is a great example of how sexism hurts everyone. Even though there isn't a woman in your relationship, stereotypes about gender and gender roles are preventing both of you from figuring out what's not working.

Telling him to "be a man" is not getting the point across, so see if other ways of explaining the problem work better. Try telling him, "I feel overburdened; I need you to step up for me" or "I feel like I'm doing too much of the work around the house and I need some support" can open up a conversation in a new way.

There's a card game called Fair Play (*fairplaylife.com*) that has helped many couples redistribute household tasks and hear each other's requests without defensiveness. Try it out at a time when neither of you is feeling fed up and see if it helps you clear the air.

Dear Eric: This is regarding "Concerned for the Future": the mother concerned for the financial well-being of her mentally and physically disabled son after her death. There are now federal accounts available, similar to 529 plans, for such individuals. An ABLE plan (Achieving Better Life Experience) allows anyone to donate a maximum of up to $18,000 a year to this plan.

He can access this account with a debit card for medical and personal living expenses. A Special Needs Trust can be set up by mom to be funded now or at her death that will fund the ABLE plan annually for the lifetime of the son and give him independence and financial stability.

Parent of a Disabled Adult

Dear Parent: Thank you for this insight. A few readers wrote in about ABLE plans as an option. The ABLE Plan National Resource Center (*ablenrc.org*) also has a wealth of information.

Dear Eric: I think you were too kind to the woman who said she was "unusually hurt" because her spouse binge-streamed a series while she slept, and "truly hurt" even after he apologized ("Tuned Out").

You could have told her to save her letter, reread it in 10 years, and if she laughs at her long-ago hurt, it means she has gained some perspective.

Hindsight

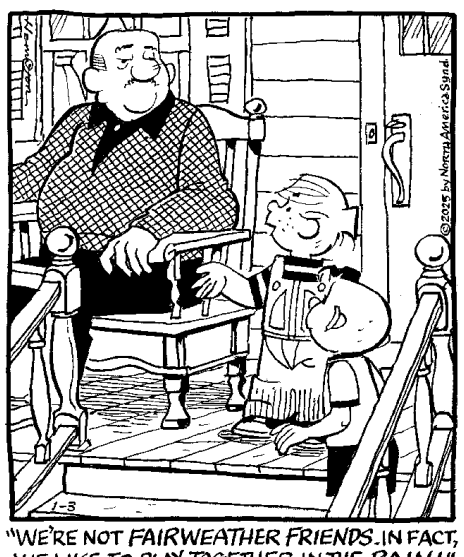
Dear Hindsight: A lot of problems look different with time, space and new context. My hope is that a lot of people who write to the column will reread their letters in 10 years and feel differently. But this was a young couple who don't have the benefit of time yet to help them right-size their disagreements. With every letter, I want to meet them where they are so they can get to the next place.

Email questions to *eric@askingeric.com*.

FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane

"Dolly's throwing the broken pieces away without drying them."

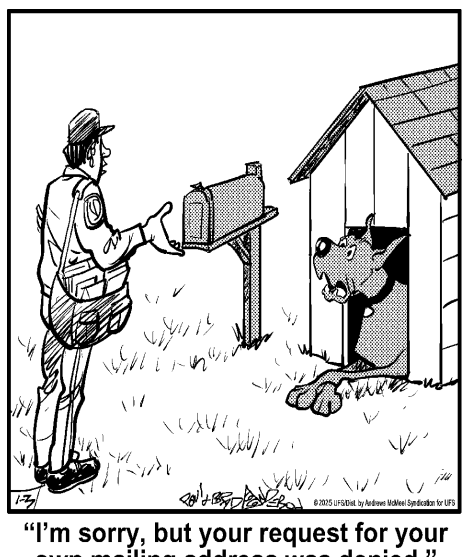
DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead

"His begging has gotten out of control."

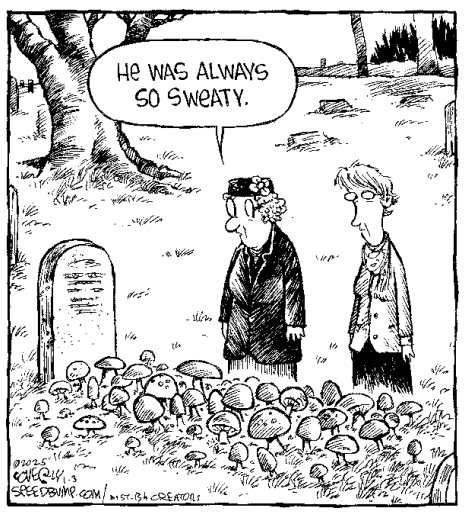
MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



"I'm sorry, but your request for your own mailing address was denied."

BLISS By Harry Bliss

SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



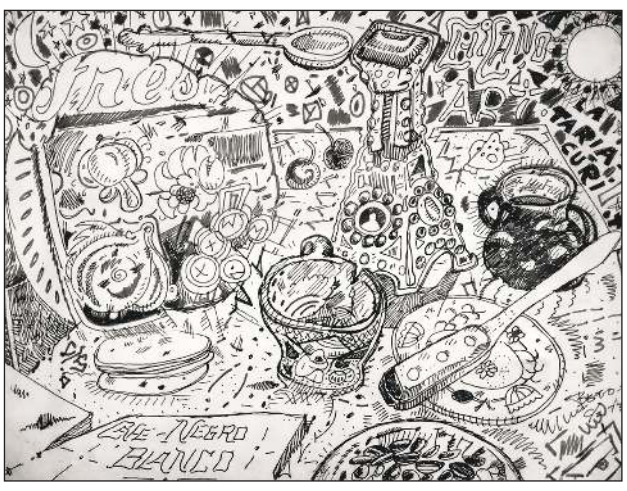


Image from AltaMed and the De La Rocha family

THE ARTIST'S still-life "La Mesa de Frank," which appeared in LACMA's 1974 "Los Four" exhibition.

The 'controlled chaos' of a Chicano artist

LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

BETO DE LA ROCHA sits for a portrait in 1995. Last year the artist marked the 50th anniversary of "Los Four: Almaraz/De la Rocha/Lujan/Romero" at LACMA, the first major exhibition of Chicano art in L.A.

[**Artist,** from E1]

and a cosmic frenzy of stars and moons.

The drawing was part of the "Los Four" show at LACMA featuring the works of De la Rocha, Carlos Almaraz, Gilbert "Magu" Lujan and Frank Romero — the first major exhibition of Chicano art in L.A., during an era when Latinos were largely ignored by mainstream art spaces. The show's 50th anniversary last year brought into focus the genius and career of De la Rocha, who now lives in assisted living but continues to paint whenever he visits his sister.

Family and friends describe his approach to drawing as either simple sketches or a torrent of pen strokes, depending on the era. In the 1960s, he was inspired by Abstract Expressionists like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.

De la Rocha's son Zack, lead singer of Rage Against the Machine, likens his father's painting style to that of jazz legend John Coltrane: Both artists build from a simple concept, delve into a frenzy and land back on something familiar.

Zack recalls as a young boy watching his father instinctively draw in a rapid-fire process. "Like a confident controlled chaos," Zack said, adding via email: "I was pretty blown away when the subject of the piece would take shape through the storm of scribble."

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Beto de la Rocha cannot recall his early art. Loved ones describe his memory as fragile but don't attach any medical terms to his condition. In conversations with the artist, it's clear that the details from his life are constantly shifting in his mind, as though his memories refuse to stand still.

He thinks that his early paintings were lost when he moved, or that someone left them out in the rain, or that they were stolen, according to Beto's younger sister, Carola de la Rocha.

He doesn't recall that he destroyed much of his own work in a bonfire in a Lincoln Heights backyard. He can't put words to what led him to do that.

Those close to him say he was allergic to talking up his work in order to sell it, and for a time he gave up art altogether and turned to the Bible. "Which was odd, because we grew up Jewish," Carola says.

But her brother does remember — smiles, in fact — when asked about the groundbreaking LACMA exhibition he helped to put together with his fellow Chicano artists.

"We wanted to show people who we were," he says proudly.

Los Four were college-educated artists who did not set out to have their work appear at LACMA. They had day jobs and often debated art theory at Romero's kitchen table in Angelino Heights, where they wrote their ideas and sketched pictures — the same one featured in Beto's monochromatic drawing.

"We were talking about doing something bicultural, bilingual, bi la, la, la," says Romero, 83.

In 1973, Almaraz persuaded UC Irvine gallery curator Hal Glicksman to showcase their work, and that university exhibition caught the attention of LACMA curator Jane Livingston.

Despite the city's enormous Latino population and the widespread adoption of the term "Chicano" by writers and artists, their stories were not showcased at LACMA or any other major art spaces. The previous year the Chicano art group Asco spray-painted the LACMA façade to protest the lack of Latino representation in the museum.

Initially, Los Four were offered a corner of a gallery at LACMA. But the artists kept bringing in more work and flirted with the idea of parking a lowrider in the middle of their exhibition. A car wouldn't fit in the museum elevator, so they settled on a portion of a 1952 Chevrolet.

Eventually the museum surrendered an entire wing, Romero says. The four artists showcased a collaborative mural, paintings on canvas, sketches on paper and a pyramid of dolls, masks, ceramic figures and books.

The Times reported that the exhibition "functions partly as a spoof of the museum, its bloodlessness and general uptightness." But the newspaper also said, "The mirror reflects both ways. The museum's stuffiness reflects 'Los Four's' self-conscious scruffiness. If both sides can accept those balanced truths with a laugh, maybe both will learn something."

The review in The Times said LACMA was airing the point of view of "special interest groups" and was "subject to political influence."

In response, muralist Judithe Hernández wrote a letter to The Times. "The Ghetto and the Reservation do exist," she said. "They are a very real part of American society." (Hernández joined Los Four just before the LACMA show, but her work was not included because it was not featured in the UC Irvine show. She would go on to become a regular member with the group.)

Despite the contempt that the paper displayed for the show, "Los Four: Almaraz/de la Rocha/Lujan/Romero" was viewed as groundbreaking for Chicano representation, Romero and Hernández say.

Unlike other Chicano artist groups of the time, Los Four captured the socio-economic and political histories of Chicano culture, says Loretta Ramirez, assistant professor of Chicano and Latino studies at Cal State Long Beach.

Los Four, Ramirez says, "are pulling from a lot more heritage and cultural practices. I'm thinking about the mixed media that they use, found objects, the quoting of cultural heritage, some of the Indigeneity. They're responding to much of the visual politics, visual rhetoric from the farmworkers' movement, as well as the Vietnam protests."

The show arrived at a tumultuous time in the city, just a few years after the Chicano Moratorium, a movement of Chicano activists who opposed the Vietnam War. Until then, Latinos were largely absent from the structures of power and culture.

Romero printed large posters to promote the show, with one featuring a portrait of Beto's mother. She floats in a sea of stars, a heart and the handwritten font that would become synonymous with Cholo-style tagging. The names of his contemporaries and his family join declarations like "Arte Chicano Existe" and "Que Viva La Raza."

Zack imagines people looking at his grandmother on the poster and wondering whether she was a queen or an heiress or a famous musician. In reality, she was a "working-class Mexicana from Mazatlán who fled north to reclaim a tiny corner of a Los Angeles barrio, Frogtown," he says.

"You don't need to have written a book or have read one to understand how much of a coup that was or how redemptive and therapeutic the act of painting was for that young firebrand from East Los," he says.

::

Carola says she and her brothers were first-generation Latinos who spoke Spanish fluently but felt that the term Chicano didn't belong to them. It didn't seem fair to take away the Chicano identity from the pachucos, cholas and other groups who had endured so much mistreatment in America.

"It was a new term and we struggled with it a bit," she says.

Around 1963, Beto attended East Los Angeles College and met Lujan, who introduced him to the concepts surrounding Chicano struggle.

"I was American at the time — not even Mexican American," he joked during a 1999 interview with Lujan and Romero preserved in the Cal State University digital archives.

"We were very isolated Mexicans," he said, joking about growing up in Elysian Valley and Lincoln Heights. "We were leery of Chicanos and Americans who didn't appreciate our being higher-class Mexicans. We were like caught in between."

But Beto would make up for lost time. He worked with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers movement, painting a mural with Almaraz honoring their fight. He helped to popularize the observance of Día de los Muertos in Los Angeles, working with Self Help Graphics in the early 1970s, according to his friend, photographer Oscar Castillo. Beto also contributed art, essays and short stories to the Chicano literary magazine Con Safos.

"He was his own artist, and he created images that were important to him," Castillo says. "Beto did not hit you over the head with his ideas. He was quiet, but he was an important voice."

Los Four's legacy as Chicano pioneers is firmly established today, according to Tiffany Ana López, dean of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at UC Irvine, who says the group provided a "landscape of vision and voice for the next generation to find their way."

"One of the most impactful things about Los Four is that they pushed against the status quo and resisted traditional mindsets," López says.

But success was not guaranteed after the LACMA show, Romero says. The members did not immediately find steady work.

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

DE LA ROCHA takes a break from painting to pose with sister Carola at her L.A. home in September.

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

DETAIL of the artist's 2004 self-portrait.

Beto's creative flair was admirable, but he also struggled with his mental health, Hernández says.

"He was struggling with his own personal demons," she says.

"There was a time when Magu and Carlos had to take Beto to be admitted to the hospital, because he was seeing things," Romero says. "We were all a little worried about him."

Zack recalls growing up with a father who appeared stoic and difficult to read.

"But over time I sensed some real regret," he says. "When you're fighting through episodes of real depression, I think it can skew your perspective and leave you with some feelings of diminished self-worth. So, when faced with the praise that he deserved or when his work was granted a certain historical import, I think there was a part of him that struggled to process what he thought was a contradiction — even if it was coming from me."

It was during this period that Beto blamed art for the failure of his marriage to wife Olivia. He took up a fanatical and literal interpretation of the Bible, says Carola.

He believed he had created graven images of false idols with his art, and he gave up a teaching position at East Los Angeles College. He moved into his father's home in Lincoln Heights, boarded up the windows, placed locks on the doors and began a 40-day fast.

"He was fasting on orange peels and water," Romero says.

Already a thin man, Beto became emaciated and dropped to about 75 pounds, Carola says.

Around this time, when Zack was about 5 or 6 years old, he asked if he could have one of his dad's landscape drawings. Beto said no.

"Here was a very tender young boy asking for this thing — a piece of flat canvas with paint, an object, a nothing — and I denied it to my son, a human," Beto told The Times in 1995, fighting back tears. "How could I have been so possessive?"

Beto made his son gather all the art in the house — landscape paintings, intricate woodblock prints, abstract works — and he shredded them with scissors and set fire to the scraps in a trash can in the backyard.

Family members tried to reason with Beto and convince him to break his fast, Carola says.

"We really thought he was going to die," she says.

Beto's mother, Cecilia, arrived at his bedside and force-fed him drops of juice while the family waited for an ambulance. Hallucinating, he kept yelling at his mother, insisting that something was lurking in the room.

It would take 20 years before he would open himself up again to art, according to friends and family.

Because De la Rocha destroyed so many of his early works, demand is high for his drawings and paintings, Carola says. She has approached private collectors to see whether they would give their works back to him, since he could not afford to buy back his own art. She largely blames Romero, whom she believes profited off her brother's art by selling his work.

Romero says he returned multiple paintings and drawings by Beto to Zack. Romero donated other works to art institutions to preserve Beto's work, and he held onto only a handful of sketch drawings, he says.

"I have nothing left, or they're very small really," Romero says, referring to a few framed sketches that Beto made during their kitchen table group discussions.

The two men were at Eastern Projects Gallery for a show in the summer celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Los Four exhibition, but they missed each other by a few hours.

"It would have been a wonderful reunion," Romero says. "I would have loved to have seen him."

Carola believes her brother still holds a grudge against Romero. But it's unclear what Beto thinks about his old friend, because he doesn't remember anyone by the name Frank.

Hernández recalls that when she first met Beto, he was opposed to including a woman in the group. He was cold to her and didn't make the effort to listen to her input. Then in 2009, Zack brought Beto to her birthday party at a restaurant.

She was shocked to see him, because they had not talked in decades.

"He walked into the room, he came over to me and just burst into tears. He said, 'I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I owe you an apology. I was so mean to you,' " Hernández says. "I'm sorry that didn't happen sooner, because I really didn't get to know him that well."

The other members of Los Four continued to make art throughout their careers. Lujan died in 2011 from prostate cancer, and Almaraz died in 1989 from AIDS-related causes.

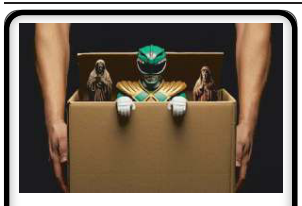
Today Beto's studio is his sister's patio. He cannot recreate his old paintings and says he would not want to. His sister's home is filled with his unfinished sketches and portraits of his family, including one of Zack.

"It doesn't have that same amount of detail that the other pieces he did of the family, but I didn't get into the weeds about it," Zack says. "My attitude was like, 'Gracias, maestro, you earned your peace, I'll fill in the rest.' "

Beto's latest work, the one giving him trouble on his sister's patio, is a painting of two dogs, Bichons named Luna and Miel — Moon and Honey. A reference photo shows the dogs in neutral tones, but Beto's Impressionistic painting bursts with golds, blues and pearl.

Carola, a former dancer with Ballet Folklórico de México, puts on a recording of a Spanish guitar. As the music drifts over him, Beto appears at ease with himself, unbothered by questions about his legacy.

He does not have the words to describe his world, but like always, his work speaks for itself.



"Woodcutter"
A One Man Show

What actually makes a house isn't just the walls. It's the people within them, and how they shape us. But what happens when they're gone? Come find out. Grieve, laugh, cry. Step into our home. Become a part of our story. Lee Strasberg Theatre. Jan. 9th-19th.

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